



Kashmir Archeology

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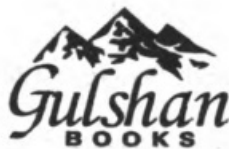
15 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

IQBAL AHMAD

**KASHMIR
ARCHEOLOGY**

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PREFACE

The valley of Kashmir says Lawrance "is the holy land of the Hindus". He says, "I have rarely been in any village which cannot show some relic of antiquity – curious stone miniatures of the old Kashmir temples, huge stone miniatures of the old Kashmir temples, huge stone seats of Mahadeo, Phallic emblems innumerable, carved images heaped in grotesque confusion by some clear spring have met me at every turn."

To me this land is sacred for all of us who lives here. If it is land of ancient temples it can be also called land of ancient stupas, mosques, tombs and Gurdawaras, besides there are also seen few olden Church's in its few glorious cities. It is a land of archeological wonders where we see the ruins of wonderful archeological monuments which depicts some more advanced architectural influences.

The study and exploration of these wonderful remains has a long history. Foreign travelers which mostly comprised of European archeologists and research scholars came to the valley from the middle of the 19th century. Alexander Cunningham, Bishop W. G, Chaplain, H H Cole, George Buhler, A Stein, W H Nicholas, C J Rogers and R B Whitehead were few famous archeologists who carried extensive archeological explorations and identified several ancient cities and settlements of the land. These European scholars were followed by few local researchers which helped a lot in discovering the archeological treasures of this land.

The mission of archeological explorations and excavations still continues in recent past few wonderful archeological discoveries were made which added new dimensions to our archeological history.

The book, titled "Kashmir Archaeology" makes mention of our archaeological treasures which besides other things has incorporated few new discoveries and provides a deep inside view and present state of affair of Kashmir archeological. The students of archeology and the tourists with intellectual taste in particular and people in general would find this book of mine not only informative but interesting as well.

I am grateful to Gulshan Publishers Private Limited for publication of this book.

Iqbal Ahmad
Athawajan, Srinagar

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KAK'S DISCOVERIES

R C Kak as a politician and administrator may be controversial but as an archaeologist and historian his contributions are extraordinary. According to late Moti Lal Saqi, as an archaeologist, historian and scholar Kak was one among us, it was his expertise that he re-constructed the story of past, brought to light several archaeological remains and came across such hidden truths to which our historians had no access.

Born in 1893 in a Pandit family at Srinagar, Kak received his basic education in a local school and then in a college. His first appointment as librarian in S P College provided him an access to the treasure of books housed there. He had deep interest in research and Sanskrit learning. By that time Kashmir darbar had established a full-fledged research and archaeology department. The programme of preserving ancient sites and ruins had been taken in hand and a museum was setup in Srinagar.

A few European archaeologists and research scholars who had come to the valley during the middle of 19th century had initiated a systematic survey and study of ancient ruins and coins. Cunningham, Cowie, Major Hardy, Garrick, Buhlor, Stein, Nicholls Percey Brown, Rodgers and others made extensive surveys and explorations. Some

excavations had been undertaken notably at Awantipora, Ushkura and Martand by D R Shani. The archaeological researches and excavations took a new turn when Sir John Marshall took over as the head of Archaeological Survey of India. He promoted scientific methods in excavations. During the period the state of Jammu and Kashmir had no archaeologist of its own. It had to depend on borrowed experts. R.C Kak desired to undergo for archaeology training, which was full filled by the darbar. Fortunately, Kak had a chance to learn archaeological sciences under the guidance of Sir John Marshall (Master of Indian Archaeology), from 1914 to 1919 AD Kak had enough time to benefit from the expertise of his master. When he was back, he had become a brilliant archaeologist. It is said that the master of Indian archaeology was so much impressed by his pupil that he offered him a responsible post in his department but Kak was not allowed by the then Maharaja. So when he was back he assumed the charge of first superintendent of state archaeology and research department. From 1919 to 1929 he served the department in various capacities. During his 10 year long tenure, he did such works in Kashmir archaeology that the period is still remembered as the glorious period of Kashmir in the archaeological research's and publications. He studied the antiquities, ruins, coins and sites throughout the length and breadth of the state. He for-warded his researchers and

observations in a number of papers and authored several books on the subject. To further quench his thirst he visited Bhimber, Bahsoli, Ramnagar, Rajouri, Poonch and even to Marev Warwan valley. After completion of his field surveys he forwarded his conclusions in three books. Antiquities of Bhimber and Rajouri, Antiquities of Basohli and Ramnagar and Antiquities of Marev Warwan. What he had learned through his master he introduced the same in his research too. He adopted scientific methods of excavations and experimented it in his remarkable discovery of Harwan ruins. These excavations were taken up here in 1925. Kak properly studied the exhumed materials of the exposed layers. He brought to light the first kind of terracotta culture of 3rd and 4th centuries, foundation of old temples, courtyard of terra cotta tiles bearing figures with representation of central Asian features and dress. Kak attributed the site to Buddhists and did not rule out the presence of non-Buddhist imprints in its later phases. His date, identifications and observations of the motifs stamped on the tiles and on the exhumed coins are unchallenged. Another pioneering work on Kak's credit stands his two famous books, one "The Ancient Monuments of Kashmir and the other a Handbook of SPS Museum at Srinagar."

GABBA SAZI

GABBA, a woolen floor cover was very popular in Kashmir. The tradition in villages was that guestrooms in houses were decorated with beautiful and coloured floor covers consisting of Gabbas. It was not in all cases that guest rooms were already decorated some well to do families had their guest rooms called Dewaan Khaana at all times covered with Gabbas & Namdas.

The middle and lower middle class families were in possession of Gabbas. It was used only when some guest was supposed to arrive. Gabbas were then placed on the mat floor that gave a very nice look and this portion of floor was used by the guest. Like Samovar, Gabba was considered essential for a household and the people who had no Gabba, had to borrow it from his neighbours at the arrival of his guest.

A Gabba was a unique type of floor covering. It was prepared from old woolen blankets called Chader. It was made in a variety of forms and designs. The three major types of the Gabba were, appliqué or Dalgulaar with a circular star in the middle called Chand, embroidery and printed.

The Applique type of Gabba was considered a high quality Gabba In this form same coloured piece of wool-

en blanket were brought so together and embroidered on joints which were giving a fine designs mostly of sun and moon. This type of Gabba is said were the photo-types of Jamawar, where miniature needles were applied in bringing separately embroidered piece together. The embroidered one were very common while as printed Gabba were merely the imitations of embroidered ones available at very cheap rates. The earlier types of applique designs had almost disappeared, one such piece called Mughal type Gabba is also preserved in the textile gallery of the State Museum Srinagar. The other types of are common and prepared in several localities of Anantnag.

Like other arts, Gabba Sazi is considered a very old art of-Kashmir, scholars have identified bronze figure of Buddha dated to 6th century AD shown seated on such a floor cover which, according to them resembles with a Gabba, on several olden paintings the floor covers had been shown consisting of Kashmiri Gabba. To the late period, one Kabuli Refugee called Abur Rahman is said to have prepared an embroidered Saddle-piece of his host Kamal Bhat of Ratson Village near Tral. This piece is believed to have revived the centuries old Gabba tradition of Kashmir. Maharaja Rambir Singh gave a further fillip to the Gabba industry when he invited Muhammad Bat, Jamal Bat, Rasul Magray and Nur Sheikh the masters of

this craft to Kashmir. The Shaminana's, Qanats & Gabba's were prepared and used in the state guesthouses.

Despite of inviting masters of the craft to Srinagar and planting of the trade in the city the art could not lost for long while in the city. The reasons for it were that the Srinagar based craftsmen were already employed in Shawl looms. So the Gabba sazi could not gained the attention of urban artists. The work from here expanded to the villages where the village artists were produced woolen blankets Chader. The Gabba sazi had an easy access to the raw material in the villages. Islamabad gave a fillip to Gabba Sazi. It prepared maximum types of the crafts and supplied it to other parts of the Kashmir.

Although tradition of Gabba floor covering has very decreased due to introduction of other modern floor covers, but still Gabbas are regarded as the classical floor covers. It is the need of the hour to improve its quality and make it so useful that it compete with other newly emerging floor covers. The craft which once was a popular village craft has considerably vanished even from the traditional belts.

STEIN AND KASHMIR

Few days back the University of Kashmir and the state tourism department jointly organized a 2 day seminar titled "Arul Stein and Kashmir" although majority of the participants were of touts but there were few well learned men like Muhammad Yousuf Taing who made the occasion to some extent colourful. Unfortunately, the concerned institutions who held this seminar knew very little about this legendary historian and archaeologist expertise and technical staff. Still they organized this seminar which was a welcome step and some light was thrown on the works of Stein. There were few participants to whom the name of Stein was new thing. Apart from learned historians and archaeologists very few know who was Stein.

Sir Mark Arul Stein was a Hangarian scholar born in Budapiston November 26, 1862. As recorded by his friends, from the very beginning he had a thirst to visit and study eastern culture. For this purpose, he achieved degrees in several disciplines of eastern history and culture from leading European universities and later worked on a doctorate in the same field. In 1885 he got an opportunity to visit the then British India where he got the job of a principal in the Lahore College. It was from here that Stein started his mission of research and went to nearby Bunar area to examine the scattered remnants and debris

of ancient Undayana Empire, which were scattered on its beautiful landscape.

In 1901, Central Asian plains attracted the passion of Stein. He spent a good time in ancient Khotan and studied the material culture of the region. He came across a collection of ancient, artifacts, manuscripts and Tibetan antiquities. He studied the material properly and forwarded his observations in his book *Ancient Khotan* in 1907. In this book he has also brought to light the ancient links of Khotan with other contemporary cultures. He felt the imprints of sub continent's culture on Khotan.

Stein made extensive archaeological researches in Baluchistan and discovered several ancient settlements. His discovery of Mahaban was a remarkable one. Of his high expertise Stein was again recommended for Central Asian survey and in 1906 he made a historic discovery at Tunhang that consisted of the remains of western portion of the Great Wall of China. The wall and caves were of ancient times, constructed to protect ancient China from the attack of Hun. The discovered caves still remembered here as Buddhist caves. One of these caves was closed from all of its sides. Incidentally in 1900, when the doors of this cave got opened a big collection of manuscripts and paintings made on silk cloth were recovered. China took the major portion of this collection. Stein could, however,

get access to study several of these manuscripts. What Stein observed in his second expedition he compiled it in his another book. In year 1915 Stein went to Russia and from here moved to Samarqand, Khurasan and Seistan. He made a detailed survey of these dates and came across ancient settlements and remains of Buddhist monasteries and stupas on the mountain passes of Seistan. He conducted extensive researches on its typography, geography, archaeology, history and culture and published it in his another grand book (in four volumes) in 1928.

Stein's Kashmir research was extraordinary. He had great love and affection with this land and its people and made several visits to this valley. Mahind Marg was the place where Stein used to study and compile them in the shape of books. The place is situated in the lapse of Harmukh. "It was this place that Stein had desired to be buried in", says his Kashmiri Pandith friend Ramchandbali. However, Stein died in Afghanistan and is buried there in Kabul's Christian graveyard.

Till the arrival of Arul Stein in Kashmir, several European missionaries made several visits to Kashmir and provided their sketches of this land. Father Gersome Xaviera and Benoist de Gois accompanied Mughal emperor Akbar to Kashmir. The next European traveler of note who wrote on Kashmir was the Jesuit priest. A more detailed account

was given by a French physician, Francis Bernier who accompanied Aurangzeb in 1665. George Forster, Vigne and Moorcraft also provided interesting travel diaries of Kashmir. Fredric Drew and Cunnigham geographical, archaeological and numismatic accounts generated a good deal of interest among scholars to study more and more ancient remains, epics and culture of the valley.

George Buhler's memorable tour of Kashmir in 1875 resulted in the discovery of valuable material for a systematic study of the history of Kashmir. He primarily got engaged in collection and examination of old Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts. He gave graphic and accurate notes of some old sites in the valley which he visited himself. In his tour report he indicated the manner in which a thorough study of Kalhan's Rajtarangni and historical typography of Kashmir was undertaken. It won't be wrong to say that Arul Stein followed the Buhlers methods in his researches on Kashmir.

He was in Lahore when he desired to have a genuine manuscript of Rajtarangni. He arrived in Kashmir in 1888 and succeeded in the discovery of 17th century copied manuscript of Kashmir chronicle written by Ram Kanth. Stein was very well conversant with Sanskrit, Persian, Kashmiri, Pushtu and English. He could also decipher the ancient's scripts like Greek, Arabic, Kharaoshti, Brahmi

and Sharda and translate them. During the translation of Rajtarangni, Stein is said to have studied not only the Kanth's manuscript but even on the spot investigated various historical sites and remains of Kashmir. He identified several names recorded in corrupt form in Rajtarangni.

It was really a very difficult task for a foreigner to study Rajtarangni and to trace out the various historical events, sites and dates from the chronicle and identify those on the ground. In the words of late Moti Lal Saggi in his article on Sir Mark Aurel Stein, "the role of Stein in the restoration of Kashmir history and cultural heritage is extraordinary which in itself is the foundation of the sum of the researches. If there had been no Stein, the Kak and Sofi accounts would have remained incomplete."

Kashmir served as the first milestone in Stein's research pursuits. That is why he was in deep love with Kashmir. Stein in his accounts has made mention of it.

"After several central Asian expeditions, I could get time and peace in my beloved mountain valley of Kashmir to rethink and study those investigations and observations which I had made in my researches of those far flung areas. There was no change in my love for Kashmir." Stein used to spend his summer vacations in Kashmir and visit and investigate the archaeological sites. Besides he took keen

interest in learning Kashmiri language and literature. With the help of his Kashmiri Friend Govind Koul, he could consolidate and compile Hatam's tales, a collection of tales. These were narrated to him by one Hatim. Teli, who was a professional story teller of Panchle. Stein also visited Gilgit and identified and deciphered several human records on the mountains of Hunza and other places. These records were in shape of human and animal carvings and descriptions were given in Kharoshti and Brahmi epigraphs. He could decipher names of several Kushan and Kidar princes on its rock edicts. The incomplete task of Gilgit was later on taken up by Ahmad Hussain Dani, a Pakistani scholar who identified hundreds of epigraphs and other human carvings on the sides of newly constructed Karakoram high way. He forwarded his results in the article "Human records on Korkaram high way." Unfortunately, the survey of Leh and Kargil areas remained still untraced. If its survey is done we can have a more concrete picture of Ladakh. It was Stein's survey of the region, which encouraged the later archaeologists to search the human records of the area. Arul Stein wrote a series of books on central Asia and Kashmir. His leading write ups include translating of Kalhana's Rajtarangni, ancient geography of Kashmir, Sir India, Alexandra's tract in India, Marco-Polo's account of Mongolian roads in Kashmir, Hatim's tales, identification of Parihaspura, a note on Avantipura, a note on Kashmiri

monuments and memoir of maps illustrating the ancient geography of Kashmir.

SAVE PARIHASPURA

The recent statement about establishing of a new capital city at the site of the ancient capital city of Parihaspura, which few days back was made by State's Finance Minister has puzzled most of the intellectuals of the land. People are also surprised and their question is, has Srinagar turned so ugly that it can not now continue as the summer capital of the land...? They are also worried about Srinagar's geography and feel that perhaps its boundaries have cramped so much that it cannot house any more office complexes of the State government.

There are many who say that Srinagar's geography has not shortened, it has widened and has enough space left for major office and business complexes to be raised anywhere in this city. Their view is that Srinagar has not turned so ugly but it is the mood of our Finance Minister who vows to rewrite Kashmir history again. He acts to become another Lalitaditya of the land and so intends to finish the lost evidence of the Lalitditya, if any are left on the plateaus of historic Parihaspura. He thus vows to laid a new capital city where the ancient existed.

The announcement of this new government plan has not disappointed the lover's of Srinagar city alone but the lover's of Parihaspura are also worried about the glori-

ous archaeological remains of this land. They feel that if government succeeds in these plans and a new capital city is raised at Parihaspura that would certainly pose a preservation threat to the entire remains of the ancient city of Parihaspura. There are many experts who say that construction of business establishments means inviting more of human vandalism to Parihaspura. Parihaspura requires more attention in archaeological terms.

It is a world class archaeological site which does not need that the capital be again built there, but what it needs is a comprehensive conservation project to save the glorious remains of the site. What is in Parihaspura? Many historians and archaeologists know it well, but there are others who know very little about these remains.

Parihaspura archaeological remains are scattered on a few plateaus, locally known as "Kanishahre". These remains are associated with most famous ruler of ancient Kashmir, known to history as Maharaja Lalitaditya who ruled this land in 8th century AD.

He was the son of Pratapaditya and originally named Muktapida. There is legend which states that this king ordered his men to burnt down the then Srinagar city which they did. Later on he founded his capital city on the glorious plateaus of Parihaspura near Shadipura. The site is also

known by the name of Diver. It was in 1892 that Stein, a Hungarian scholar first found few remains at Parihaspura. Later on many archaeologists worked at the site, in 1925, D R Shani, an Indian archaeologist made extensive excavations on Diver wooder. Many archaeological evidences of Lalitaditya period were encountered during the excavations. The most impressive finds were of remains of Buddhist and Hindu religious edifices and their laid icons. These included the ruins of a Stupa, monastery and few remains of a Vaishnu temple. The Maharaja is believed to have been inspired by his Chinese prime minister, Can-kuna, for raising of these impressive monuments. Kalhana records installation of a huge Buddha image in one of the Stupa's at Parihaspura by die Maharaja. The image is said to have been modeled perhaps on the Bamiyan colossus.

Besides, the massive lime stone plinths of various ancient shrines, during the time of excavations revealed wonderful sculptures and ancient Coins of Rajas and Maharajas from Parihaspura wooder. The Parihaspura finds are housed in various museums all over the world. Many impressive Buddhist sculptures with amazing costumes are also found in Sri Pratap Singh Museum at Lalmandi, Srinagar. Parihaspura has exposed numerous treasure troves and there are still beneath the ground hidden treasures.

These over ground and underground treasures are to be

saved. These can not be saved by raising a new capital at the site but by undertaking a major conservation and excavation project of the site.

CHICKRI WOOD COMBS AND LOCAL OILS

Chickeri wood combs and local mustered oil (Kashur teel) were very much common among Kashmiri woman in olden days. These were the ages when there was no concept of advanced shampoos, soaps and plastic combs. Average Kashmiri woman used the traditional cosmetics which comprised of local herbs.

Since then the things have changed a lot. Like other fields, this field too had witnessed revolutionary changes. The present day woman has been taken by an array of advanced cosmetics and fancy plastic combs.

The use of traditional oils and combs have become almost outdated fashion. Its lost rare evidences are found in distant villages that too among older women. One thing is very much clear that these traditional hair costumes were very much popular in olden times.

The secret of its popularity was mainly based on its good results. There was a wide spread life of that wooden combs and mustered oil helped woman to grow their hair long, keep dandruff off and prevent hair fall. Of course the local oil and chickri combs were very useful. These used to keep the hairs healthy. Those days people had no complaints of dandruff either of hair fall, says Zoon Begum of village Zonra. She said: "We used to wash our hairs once

in a month with fresh waters and use "Hurimich" a kind of red colour mud as, no soap cakes were affordable due to poverty. After that we would apply local oil and comb our hairs with combs made of chickri wood." Zoon Begum looked 80 and speaks of the period when she was a young girl. Another woman Raja Begum who is about 75 while remembering her childhood days said: "During the times only wooden combs were available, which came from Rajouri via Mughal road. These were known as chickri combs. These combs were double-edged and very useful for our hairs". She said that it was the period when no cosmetics and shampoos were available.

Even people could not make any difference between bathing and washing soap. Some poor woman washed their hair while using Hurimich (red colour mud). "Despite of these all odds we were able to grow long black hairs by the help of combing our hair by chickri wood." she said.

Not only Zoon, and Raja several other women of their ages carried a similar view. Even few modern day women endorsed the experiences of these old women.

These women felt that not only the modern day combs, the shampoo and hair colours and other costumes have effected the hairs of the present day: women very badly. Mahak, a teenage girl says: "I have dropped all sorts

of shampoos, colours and fancy plastic combs because I observed these cosmetics damaged my hair". These days she uses local mustered oil and wooden comb to repair her hair. "These aids have helped me a lot to repair my damaged hair," claims the girl. It is not so that every body would agree with these women but one thing is clear that there are few substandard costumes which have given birth to few skin and hair diseases. The traditional hair oils and wooden combs had a good effect on our hair, especially the chickri wood, a famous herb of Pirpanchal.

It is a pale, cream coloured soft wood exclusively found in Pirpanchal range. The combs are manufactured in Rajouri District in variety of designs. A special design of panjradar comb was used by Kashmiri brides.

RICHES OF LIDDER VALLEY

Pahalgam and Gulmarg are the most renowned tourist spots in Kashmir. Every year lakhs of tourists throng these spots just to enjoy the delectable natural sights here. Although visitors mostly visit these spots for their tourist value, to some discerning tourist's these-places are important for their archaeological richness. It is said that these are the places that revealed the presence of some earliest human existence in Kashmir. Pahalgam valley also known as Lidder valley is situated at a height of 7000 ft above sea level.

In 1928 some experts undertook a detailed study of glaciations sequences of Kashmir valley here. It was in this year that a Geologist Grin Linton by name found the first hand made boulder on the right bank of the Lidder valley, few feet below Pahalgam. At the time it was seen as the first man made artifact found in Kashmir valley. This discovery invited-the attention of those archaeologists who were in search of the earliest human tools.

Archaeologists had earlier found stone tools of earliest Stone Age from the regions of sub Himalayan and Potwar area of Soan valley which lies in Rawalpindi in Pakistan. It was believed that the people of South-Asian regions had first emerged from Soan valley. The archaeo-

logical investigation of other valleys including Indus and Kashmir valley was also undertaken.

In Kashmir valley first human evidences were found in Pahalgam and Gulmarg regions. It was in 1928 when Dr. Grin Linton found the first hand made boulder at Pahalgam. This discovery invited the attention of other archaeology in the valley

Dr H D Sankhila along with his team of experts visited this valley in 1960. He came across the first Paleolithic tool in the form of a huge massive flake 255 cm long and 10 cm broad. This was yet another discovery of man made objects from the valley. After this discovery the site was excavated for further investigation which revealed several choppers and scrapers.

After thorough investigation the place was marked as a site of the early Paleolithic period. The archaeological sites belonging to the earlier period of Lidder valley are well identified and have been thoroughly studied. These finds stand mentioned in archaeological records of Kashmir valley.

As regards the stone tools found recently by a local archaeologist from the Afarwath area of Gulmarg, these are yet to figure in the archaeological records. So far many archaeologists have claimed to have found several earli-

est stone tools from the slopes of Gulmarg.

While analyzing the historical records of Kashmir and when these evidences are also taken into account one comes to the conclusion that Lidder valley and Gulmarg were amongst the first abodes of civilization here. The people who lived here led pure nomadic existence and were alien to the modern day concept of earning ones livelihood. The stone tools found at these sites, revealed that the people had knowledge of making single edged stone tools.

Though conjectures keep on going regarding their origin, nobody knows for sure who these people were and where had they come from? For arguments sake one can say that these nomads may have come from the neighbouring states but who these were is almost, difficult to say.

Besides nomadic evidences, Lidder valley has revealed emergence of more civilized tribes which are believed to have flourished on various plateaus of this valley. These evidences have come from Donipath, Hibnar and Darad Kote villages, where one can see that besides small stone pebbles the ancient tribes who used large bricks in their constructions. These bricks were highly finished and bear advanced motifs of human and animal figures. The

area also revealed several mysterious finds which are under, observation of experts.

Most of the evidences of ancient coins of Hun Kings have also been found from the Lidder Valley. Sometime back hoards of 22 coins of King Tormana were reportedly found at Ashmuqam. Lidder valley is still considered rich in terms of archaeological assets. If systematic explorations are carried, out here, some more information would definitely come to fore about our ancient glorious past.

In Kashmir there is no dearth of historical riches. Heritage sites dating back to ancient times exist everywhere. Need is to explore the hidden assets by way of continuous explorations at places where signs of past exist.

LOST TREASURES

Though the valley has its own cultural repository, the SPS Museum established way back in 1889 by Maharaja at Srinagar, most of the treasure troves found after 1960 have been 'stolen' out of the valley, from various archaeological sites by central government authorities. These treasures are reported to have adorned state museums outside J&K. The state has been left with the custody of a meager lot, treasures found till 1947, during Maharaja's period.

The robbed antiquities comprise of thousands of priceless archaeological artifacts which include numerous stone and terracotta sculptures, variety of silver and copper coin hoards, stone and bone tools and jewellery items. The market value of these items runs into crores of rupees, say the experts.

What is more aggravating is the fact that not even a single artifact of Paleolithic and Neolithic periods is left in the valley, though thousands of artifacts of these periods are recorded to have been recovered from three archaeological sites in the valley.

The main archaeological sites wherefrom such treasure troves stand fleeced include the mega-lithic sites of Burzham and Gofkral, Greek period site of Semithan

(Bijbehara), Kushan period site of Harwan and Kanishpura (Baramulla). Besides these sites, hundreds of stray finds of this land have also been swindled out of the state.

“The unfortunate tale of the transfer of these cultural properties from valley archaeological sites started soon after 1958 when ASI (Archeological Survey of India) took over the charge of Kashmir archaeology,” says a local archaeologist, who adds, that it was in year 1955 that state legislative assembly passed a resolution under which, the assets of state archeology department all the monuments and archaeological sites, along with the concerned staff was transferred to central department of archaeology, and this agency was permitted to undertake archaeological excavations throughout the valley. The resolution got implemented in 1958 and since the ASI (Archeological survey of India) has been engaged in archeological works of the land, whatever this agency discovered here it has taken that outside the state.

Experts opine that the resolution might have been politically motivated but the fact needs to be acknowledged that there might not have been enough expertise within the valley to take care of such wealth.

“Passing of the resolution regarding cultural assets may have been politically motivated, but it is also true that

state has no-expertise and sources to maintain the monumental wealth of this land,” experts say. Archaeologists maintain that decades have passed since but the state has not yet recovered from that situation and currently the state lacks basic infrastructure, while the officials in Archeological Survey of India claim to be the best custodians of valley’s treasure troves. They allege that they are not allowed by the state authorities to acquire the land to construct their museum.

The Archeological Survey of India officials argue that the treasures had to be shifted to museums outside the state for preservation. They might be justified in their argument but the fact remains that the treasures of Kashmir are no longer here. The state government maintained and continues to be silent over the issue. Why couldn’t the state authorities ensemble people who could be trained and thereof trusted with these ‘invaluable’ treasures. A nexus can be smelled here between the two parties which dealt with Kashmir’s treasures without the knowledge of the common people.

TREASURE TROVES

I do not think Kashmir will ever succeed in getting back its treasure troves -what has already flown out of the Valley. It would also not succeed to stop its flow to the outside world.

During 19th Century and early decades, of 20th Century, many European missionaries were involved by the then Maharajas of this land for exploring the glorious past of the land. These missionaries succeeded in discovering plenty of archaeological sites and materials. These discoveries included ancient gold and silver coins, bronze, silver and stone sculptures, wonderful paintings, golden painted manuscripts, clay seals and tablets, inscriptions, olden shawls and papier machie objects, wooden and metal artifacts, ancient jewelry and other historical documents. Most of these prized materials were not left in this land but were taken by these missionaries. No doubt certain finds were allowed to remain in the custody of the state authorities but whatever was more historic and precious was lifted from Valley's sites.

There are only few paintings of Kashmiri Qalam housed in State museum while most of the impressive works consisting of a short story book bearing paintings of Kashmir is housed at Albert Museum in Great Britain.

Number of impressive sculptures of Lord Buddha, Bodhisatva, Manjasura and Vaishnu are housed in Pasadena and Toronto art galleries. Hundreds of rare gold and silver coins found in Kashmir are housed in the British Museum, besides plenty of Kashmiri handcrafted items which include Kashmiri shawls, jamawars, tela sazi and sonzi works are also found in these museums.

Archaeological artifacts excavated from major archaeological sites of Avantipora, Parihaspura and Martand have become the prized possessions of number of European and American museums. Besides these, official museums, number of private museums and art galleries also house good number of Kashmir finds. There is not even a single artifact of Burzhama. Gufkral, Kral Chak, Takya Bal, Semithan and Kanjshpura archaeological sites left in any private or official collection of the State. These sites revealed extraordinary archaeological finds that not only carried tremendous historical value but high antique value as well. Almost all ancient records of this land are preserved in outside institutions. These included the earliest stone and bone tools and human skeletons which decades back were discovered by various archaeologists on the banks of river Lidder and Burzham plateau.

This trafficking still continues and annually hundreds of artifacts are being lifted from the Valley. This exercise is

official as well as non-official. Discovered material at the sites which are being maintained and explored by ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) are being lifted officially and placed at disposal of other Indian museums. Despite of the well-established Antiquities Act, the illicit trade of antiques also continues. The local art dealers allege that there are no takers for their respective art possessions and with the result these people sell their artifacts to outside institutions and dealers: Experts opine that law enforcement agencies are not to be blamed for any such illegal trafficking when there are no takers at home. The basic problem lies with those official organizations which do not take care of the land's treasure troves and discourage its holders. In this land, treasure trove finders are rewarded badly. Instead of being appreciated they are being questioned and mentally tortured. Finding of any treasure no doubt is good luck for its finder but in Kashmir its finder is the most unfortunate person who has to save himself from the authorities. If these individuals offer their treasures to the purchasing agencies, they are again discouraged by not purchasing their respective possessions. It is learnt that the State museum and other small repositories, for last several years could not even purchase a single artifact. Some items were invited from respective treasure holders but after collecting them in the museum, they had to take them as the State museum authorities are learnt to have declined to

purchase anything for the past several years.

This poor response of the State has been promoting local dealers to sell their treasure troves to outside institutions. When you are not appreciating its finders and neither ready to purchase their respective treasures, it means you (authorities) are responsible for this illicit trade. Everybody knows what happened to Mehjoor's treasure. When the State declined to purchase it, Mehjoor's son Muhammad Amin Mehjoor was forced to sell it to National Museum Authorities at New Delhi. Another surprising fact is that that State authorities have never made a single claim of its treasure troves housed in outside museums and art galleries.

It is another question whether, their claim is entertained or not, but the State has every right to launch such claims: Observing silence on this issue means that the State is not interested in getting back its treasure troves. This is why I feel that the State will not get its treasures back and nor would succeed in stoppage of its illegal trafficking.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Other than being irked by expensive accommodation and inconvenient transportation, lack of information and guidance network has been hindering tourists from visiting Kashmir. On reaching this 'Paradise on Earth', visitors find themselves ill-equipped to wander off in the valley. Information brochures, site and road maps which are part of 'tourist gear' around the world are missing in Kashmir: courtesy the concerned Tourism Department. These visitors, who would like to route through the beautiful contours of the valley on their own, find themselves at odds with their ambitious wanderlust.

Many visitors to the valley claimed that they were not aided by the state Tourism Department so that they could make the best of their Kashmir trip "it could not get any information even about Srinagar city, of its monuments, bridges roads and old sites," alleged one Sanjay Kumar, who with his family had come to see the old Srinagar city. Besides security precautions, lack of information was the main reason he could not see what he had arrived here for. "I was more eager to see the old town of Srinagar about which I had heard from my friends at Mumbai. I feel unfortunate that I could not see the old markets of the city, said Kumar. Lack of proper information and lack of a city map were the main reasons, which hampered Kumar's trip

through the lanes of old city. Kumar said that he had also approached the tourist authorities for a city broucher and road map but, "it was avoided with a very negative approach," alleges Kumar. He hunted for the proper city map in the local market, but to no avail.

Danish Moin and his family laid similar claims over the 'ineptitude' of the Tourist Department, saying that they had come to see the old Shah Hamdan's Mosque and old Jamia Masjid of Srinagar but the non availability of Srinagar road map and a 'monuments guide book' hindered their enthusiasm.

"I could have missed seeing the museum of the valley had I not come to know of it from an Auto Rickshaw driver," claimed Jagjeet Singh, a research scholar from JNU, Delhi. He said it is very surprising that you had such a historical big museums but no body know it

There were several such tourists who claimed that they were not provided proper guidance and information about their places of interest. They could not even get any guide book on Kashmir or on Srinagar city, they said.

So instead of motivating tourists to visit the valley, not once but time and again, the concerned are doing a negative job. While the agencies spend crores of rupees on development of tourist industry in the valley, they could

Tourist Information

certainly spare a few buck to produce some quality and reliable information publications to help the tourists, especially those who carry wanderlust in their bosom and want to fathom the valley on their.

BUDDHIST FINDS OF HARWAN

While the state authorities have considerably failed on the front of preserving and protecting centuries old archaeological finds, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has eventually shifted gears and decided to shift Buddhist finds of Harwan to New Delhi where these precious antiques would be put on display in the archaeological gallery of the National Museum.

Although the ASI has not publicized this move, but well placed sources in ASI Jammu office reveal that the agency has moved a proposal to National Museum New Delhi for the same. It has been learnt that the ASI has requested National Museum authorities to provide requisite space to the Harwan Buddhist finds. And all this is taking place, while the state authorities are learnt to have no information.

"They don't even know where Harwan finds are presently preserved," sources allege.

As per reports, around 300 precious archaeological artifacts (recovered from Harwan Buddhist monastery ruins) consisting of terracotta tiles valuing 6 crore rupees were found missing from Harwan site. Along period of searches and investigations revealed that the priceless terracotta tiles are not exactly missing but have been shift-

ed to Jammu where they are temporarily kept in a central agency's room at Ramnagar and from Ramnagar these would be transferred to New Delhi where arrangements for display of the heritage-treasures of Kashmir in a section of archaeological gallery stand comprehensively complete.

While confirming the reports of shifting of this priced treasure trove to Ramnagar Jammu the ASI authorities based at Jammu say that the agency has no plans of transferring these collections to Delhi. Defending their action, ASI authorities state that had the state authorities conceded to their demand of providing security to Harwan monastery where the finds were initially housed, they would not have shifted the terracotta tiles to Ramnagar Jammu.

LIVING WITHOUT PRINTING

To carry on the daily huge writing activities of this busy world, the position that printing machinery has established is never hidden from any one. Printing has become part and parcel of our socio-political activity. Hitherto, it was-carried with traditional machinery but flourished human activities and increased need of writing materials has given rise to the computerized printing, technology, so as to meet the printing needs of the modern man.

The need of writing was felt by man since very beginning, but neither paper nor printing was invented by him. Hand made paper was made available to him in medieval times. When man learned the knowledge of script writing, things other than paper were used for engraving purposes.

In Kashmir domestic paper manufacturing industry traveled from Samarqand during the realm of Budshah. This paper invited writers. Till engravers were engraving their writings on rocks, stones, copper plates and coins, but with the introduction of paper in Kashmir, writers replaced engravers and doors went open to the Calligraphers to show their artistic skill.

Calligraphy is a decorative writing art. The appreciation of this art was undoubtedly engendered by the Muslim

Living without printing

Law which prohibited the representation of leaving things in art. As no printing machinery was still invented, so neat and clear hand writing was the necessity of the day; and this was the principal reason why so much stress was laid upon this art. It would be interesting to note that the Arabic alphabet in its various forms as used for writing both the Arabic and Persian languages, is so well adapted for decorative purpose that almost every Muhammadan building of importance is freely adorned with texts from the Holy Qur'an or other inscriptions arranged decoratively to form part of the architectural design and often signed as the work of Calligraphers.

In Kashmir Calligraphy also traveled from Central Asia in Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen's period Sultan imported a number of Calligraphists, from Central Asia and appointed them in his court. He also gave Jagirs to them. Introducing handmade paper instead of bark leaves, the Sultan began with a number of copies of Kashshaf of Allama Zamakshari and used them in his University of Naushehra. Abul Fazil in his Tareikh provided details of Calligraphical systems used in Persia, Turkistan and India towards the end of sixteenth century. He gives that following names, and descriptions Suls Naksh consisting of one third curved lines and two-thirds straight lines Tauqi and Riga both containing three-fourths lines; Muhaqqaq and Raihan both curved con-

taining one fourth curved lines; Tuliq a composite script, formed from the Tauqi and the Riqua containing only a few straight lines; Nastaliq composed entirely of curved lines. Abul Fazil giving further details says that Nastaliq style or round Persian character, was one favoured both by Akbar and Jahangir, and consequently, was specially practised by Mughal writers from about 1560 AD to the end of the seventeenth century.

This Central Asia art flourished rapidly in Kashmir. Kashmiri students went to the universities at Bukhara. Samarkand, Herat and Merv. Arabic and Persian learned men achieved remarkable status in Kashmir.

Kashmir began to also produce leading Persian and Arabic scholars. It is said that Persia is proud of its Firdousi, Hafiz, Rumi and Nizami, Kashmir is equally proud of its Sarfi, Ghani, Dairi and Hubbi.

Kashmir also produced its own artistically written manuscripts with illuminated borders. Muhammad Hussain Kashmiri was the Court Calligraphist of Akbar and was honoured the title Zarin Qalam (of golden-pen). Abul Fazil says, "that Muhammad Hussain Kashmiri surprised his master Maulana Abdul Aziz. Muhammad died in AH 1611. Ali Chaman from Kashmir was also a noted Calligraphist of Akbar's court. Muhammad Murad Kashmiri flour-

ished at the court of Shah Jahan. He was titled Shirin Qalam. His brother Muhammad Murd was also a well known Calligraphist both the brothers were poets as well. They were merchant's sons.

Mulla Baqir Kashmiri was also in the service of Shah Jahan and was considered a master of Nastaliq, Taliq, Nasakh and Shikast.

Several Kashmiri Calligraphists got patronized in Durrani period. A well known Kashmiri Calligrapher, Bawani Das Kachroo, flourished in the court of Duranis. From here Calligraphy achieved the place of a domestic art. It traveled into almost all the literary families. It is because of this that evens today copies of Holy Qur'an and its translations with other Persian and Arabic religions and literary books written in neat and clear Calligraphy styles are available in respective collections. The Calligraphists have placed their name at the ending page of the manuscripts. Kashmiri scribe a, reed pen in writing. He invented an ink which could not be washed-off with water. The scripts that mostly got used here are in Arabic-Kufa, Nasakh, Makramat, Suls, Riqā and Raihan, in Persian-Nastaliq, Shikast, Gulzar, Nakhun, Shikastamiz Shafice, Amex etc.

SPS MUSEUM

Former Chief Minister Jammu and Kashmir Mufti Muhammad Sayeed visited historical SPS Museum of the state at Lal Mandi. As soon the CM entered the first gallery of the museum the members of SPS Museum Welfare Foundation raised slogans asking CM to save museum so that the heritage could be saved.

CM visited sculpture gallery where -in he was shown the stone sculptures of his home town Bijbehara. These Urdu icons carried images of Lakashmi and Kartikya of 7th century AD and were excavated from Semithan Bijbehara in 1925. Besides, sculpture gallery Mufti was shown, miniature paintings, decorative arts, old armory, textile, model coin, manuscripts and natural history galleries. He could also see ruined geology and mining section of the museum.

The Chief Minister was upset to see the poor state of affair of this once prestigious institution. He has been to this institution in his childhood days, when it was popularly known by the name of Ajaibghar. But those were glorious times of this museum. A delegation of museum welfare foundation apprised CM about the heritage and related issues. He was handed over a memorandum of thirteen point programme for improving the museum infrastructure

and enhancing the career of its rotten employees.

This museum is the only museum of the state housing about 1.25 lac artifacts of Kashmir's cultural heritage. It also houses about one lac ancient coins. The most outstanding artifacts include Greek coins, Devesar bronzes, Queen Didda's Bronze sculpture, Terracotta tiles, map of Srinagar on Kashmir Shawl, several historical documents, Brick back manuscripts, stuff birds and animals. The history of museum goes beyond 1900 AD. It was established by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1898. As per its collections it is 3rd largest museum of South-Asia and houses heritage materials of not only Kashmir, but also of Tibet, China, Gilgit, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Persia and Greece. Unfortunately it has become one of most neglected museums of entire world. Perhaps most neglected than Kabul museums.

The museum has no proper records, no documentations no catalogues. What is preserved here, hardly anybody knows. This museum is run by Archives and that is why it is in a mess. Those who want to save this museum are pressing for separation of museum from Archives. Would SPS Museum Welfare Foundation succeed in their this most reasonable demand and what steps Mufti government would take for saving this pioneer institution from Archives mess is to be seen.

WONDERS OF AVANTIPORA

In Kashmir there are only a few towns where one could find standing structures of the ancient past. In most of the areas the remnants of the past aren't found in a manner they existed previously as much of our historic wealth has either entirely vanished or is under threat of extinction. Natural calamities and growing human neglect has destroyed most of the ancient standing ruins in the valley. The human disregard for heritage notwithstanding, there are a few places in Kashmir which are still rich in terms of archaeological wealth and have standing ruins of its ancient structures. These ruins speak of the splendour and richness these towns enjoyed in their respective periods of history.

Avantipura is one such town where we see superb archaeological ruins of our glorious past. Although this town has lost much of its historical wealth in the past few decades, we find mention of these ruins in our historical records. Forester, a European traveler says that he has seen Avantipura ruins scattered over a vast area of the land. Vigne, another traveler who visited the town in early 19th century makes mention of various archeological discoveries of the town. He claimed to have seen a mysterious candle burning in a bathroom which was discovered by the archaeologists in the interior of the town.

Although such things find mention in historical records of Kashmir, none of it exists on the ground. Today what is found in the town are the ruins of two ancient standing structures. These are believed to be the ruins of the two temples, which Maharaja Avanti Varman had built in the town. Avanti Varman was a famous ruler of Kashmir who ruled the Valley during 855 AD to 883 AD. The king is said to have built his capital at the ancient site of Visvaikarasa on the right bank of river Vitasta. Visvaikarasa is the ancient name of the town. However, many historians say its original name was Vethpura.

Whatever is its ancient name, the town is believed to have been named after its founder Avantivarman. According to historical records the town served as the capital of Kashmir during the entire period of the reign of King Avanti Varman. While historic evidence says that the king had built several buildings at the site, including his palace, no remains of any such building are found here. Famous European archaeologists, travelers and scholars like Forster, Vegine, Richard Temple and Cunningham were among the first to explore the town. They made several discoveries here. They were followed by Diya Ram Sahni Veteran Indian archaeologist of early twentieth century.

He is said to have taken up the excavation work of the town's archaeological sites and exposed standing

remains of Avanti Swami and Avantishvara temples once dedicated to lord Vishnu and the other to lord Shiva. Besides these ruins, Sahni discovered hoards of ancient coins and artifacts from here. The most impressive of the finds are the iron antiquities which have been preserved in the archaeological gallery of SPS Museum at Srinagar. These iron aritiquates include the bow and arrow fragments which the Avanti Varman's forces are believed to have, used in warfare.

A port shed is recorded to have been discovered from a layer of excavation, bearing the name of the king. This epigraphic evidence is the only recorded find of its kind that bears the king's name. The site has also revealed exquisite stone statues of lord Vishnu which are also preserved in the Srinagar Museum. These statues have been declared as the best sculptural pieces of the land and are recorded in international archaeological records also. The standing ruins of Avantipura are the wonders of: the land which speak of highly advanced techniques of engineering-and architecture that evolved during Avanti Varmans period. There are some difficult questions regarding these ruins which need to be answered.

One such question is about its architects who raised the wonderful structures of Avantipura. Another involves taking of massive limestone slabs to the structural heights

of the structures that too in a manner so as not to make the structural joints visible. Its arched walls and columns also surprise archaeologists.

Most of the people who have little knowledge of Kashmir's history and archaeology, call these ruins as "pando lara", the buildings of Pandavs mentioned in the epic Mahabhartha. But there are only a few people who have watched these ruins keenly and attempted to understand their pattern and architectural style.

Alexander Cunningham was the first scholar who made extensive study of these ruins besides the other monuments of the land. He gives a detailed description of Kashmir's monuments and believes that all ancient monuments of the valley bear Grecian art influences. He writes the architectural remains of Kashmir are perhaps the most remarkable of the existing monuments of India, as they exhibit undoubtedly traces of the influence of Grecian art.

Avantipura ruins also belong to the same group and stand as the architectural evidence of ancient Kashmir. Though the wealth of architecture found at Avantipura is really great, there is likelihood of it becoming extinct if steps aren't taken to preserve and protect it.

MUSLIM SHRINES OF BIJBEHARA

Bijbehara is perhaps the first place in Kashmir where tremendous archaeological evidences of ancient Greek and Scythian kings have been found. But how these relics were found is difficult to tell? However, one thing is clear that it was the first place that showed cultural evidences of ancient Greeks and Scythians. There are a few mysterious ancient 'graves near its mounds and on the wooder (hillocks) called locally "Totaikshalie" wooder. A miniature tomb of some unknown saint could also be seen on this wooder.

Besides these ancient archeological relics, the town exhibits wonderful architectural evidences of its glorious past. These include tombs, mosques, temples and houses. Of these the most striking is the shrine of Baba Naseeb-ud-Din Gazi (RA), located in Baba Mohalla locality of old Bijbehara. Its plinth is square in shape, made of locally found stones, which have been-joined together with plaster.

The central chamber houses the grave of the saint. The exterior of the main chamber carries holy sayings in beautiful calligraphic style. The pillar imposed over the verandah around the central chamber supports the coiling as well as the roof.

The whole structure is covered by low pyramidal roof built in three tiers, with differing size in each successive tier. These days it is mostly of metal sheets, but originally birch sheets had been used to build it,

An octagonal steeple of Ahrami order is raised over the top of the roof, which in turn is covered with some silver type object, called Minar (dome). The shrines usually symbolize the Rishi order of architecture which is found in other Muslim Shrines of the valley also. The shrine faces south and in front of it is the most famous mosque of the town which is also believed to be the oldest one in the town.

It is attributed to Sultan Sikander of Kashmir (1390-1415 AD). It is also square in shape with a plinth that was originally made of massive limestone. It is a double storey mosque; the ground floor is made of stone while the first floor is of wood (wooden barks). The space between the barks is filled with highly finished bricks. Evidence is there to show that its original roof was also of birch leaves while windows had wooden panjaras (cages).

The other architectural monuments of the town include its Jamia Masjid (Grand Mosque), Mughal Garden called Padshahi Bagh and Dogra period, temples. One such temple built of stone is found on the left bank of the

river. It faces east and houses a, varsity of Hindu deities in its courtyard. Like other old towns of the valley Bijbehara symbolizes the-grace and zenith of its common habitation houses. Most of which either have been dismantled or are in ruins:

There are many such houses that have been de-faced by way of new additions and face lifting. Most of the old houses are found in old Bijbehara, which flourished on the left bank of river Jehlum in the bygone era. These houses are formed of small bricks called Badhshahi bricks and had originally bark leaves roofing. Many houses had wooden roofs locally known as "Singlei-Pash".

We also find a classical market here believed to have flourished on the left bank of river Jehlum. It reminds us of those days when most of trade arid commerce was carried through rivers and other waterways. Like its archaeological assets, Bijbehara's architectural wealth also needs to be explored fully and documented for future use.

KASHMIRIYAT

Seemingly, there is nothing special in my Kashmiriyat, it is just like any other culture or social concept. Every society has its own value system; for us it is Kashmiriyat and for others it may be something else. What we call Kashmiriyat, is basically a normal trait of a civilized society. Value systems of every society differ from one another. But there are certain traits that almost all communities have in common. These features are nothing but a result of our socialization. All this is the result of a natural process through which we learn to bond with one another. The trait of social bonding is found in humans only and is not associated with other creatures.

Man has been given a certain degree of superiority over other worldly creatures. There are some responsibilities and duties that only man can discharge and thus help in building relationships, which besides other things inculcate in us love, sympathy, brotherhood and above all tolerance. Man is by nature a social animal. He cannot live alone. And that is why we have tribes, communities and nations. Man is the only creature who believes in socialization. And for this he needs other creatures, their love, care and sympathy. You can see it yourself that a normal human being cannot live alone for a long time. He needs his fellow humans with whom he can bond and thereby form

a family. Families in turn give birth to communities, which then make a society comprising villages and towns.

Irrespective of where from a person has come or to which community he belongs, man cannot live alone and aloof. Different villages and towns which have a uniform system of living and share a common language and character get identified with a particular nation. In this way the people speaking Kashmiri are called Kashmiri and their collective nature as Kashmiriyat.

Similarly, there can be Punjabinat, Sindhiyat, Gujratyat, Tamiyat and so on. It is the language and culture, which make a nation different from its counterparts. We are Kashmiri because we have a common culture and language. It does not matter what religion, cast or creed we represent. Much the same may be the case with Punjabis, Sindhis, Gujratis, Marathies and others. It is this common culture and language which bonds people together. Value systems of a society make people place reliance on their own fellow beings no matter wherever they are.

The peculiar trait of ours called Kashmiriyat is endowed with rich values promoted by various tolerant rulers, Sufies and Rishis throughout its evolution. Kashmiriyat is the name of beliefs, customs and opinions that we all accept. The impact of my Kashmiriyat dawned on me

some time back while on tour outside state. It was a bright September Sunday. The Jehlum express on which I was traveling reached Bhopal station at about 4:45 p.m.

At the station, I saw a handsome couple standing outside my compartment, gazing at me keenly. They looked quite strangers and fear was visible on their faces. All of a sudden this couple started walking towards me and once before me their first enquiry was about my nationality. Hesitantly, they said, "if we are not wrong you must be a Kashmiri". My positive nod to their question made them happy. So happy were they that they could not control their emotions. Tears came down their cheeks and from mine also. The girl, a Kashmiri Pandit, told me that she wanted to go to Jammu as she did not like the place she had been brought to by her husband.

At the time most Kashmiri Pandits had left the valley and had settled at various migrant camps of Jammu. This girl was from Azad Basti, Natipora and was married to a Kashmiri Pandit boy, settled in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The girls' parents now lived in Multi Camp at Jammu. It was the seventh day of their wedding but in spite of this the girl could not adjust herself to an alien society and was eager to go back to her parents' home. Since the husband did not have time to accompany her to Jammu, they were standing at the railway station, waiting for the Jehlum ex-

press. They had come to the station in the belief that some Kashmiri might be traveling on the train and if yes, the husband would hand over the responsibility of his wife to him. When they chanced upon me their problem was solved. He entrusted me with the task of dropping his wife at her parents' home.

The scale of their trust puzzled me. For they were Hindus and the train was over crowded with Hindu passengers. But they preferred me over their fellow Hindus. Why the couple did not believe any other train passenger; most of whom were of their own faith? Soon afterwards I got the reply. Though all other train passengers were their co religionists, none of them was a Kashmiri. They were Kashmiris themselves and deemed it fit to believe their Kashmiri brother. Because we shared a common culture, language and traditions, they preferred me over all others. This incident taught me that though we all practice different faiths, we share a common bond called Kashmiriyat.

TREASURES OF BIJBEHARA

There are many towns, cities and villages which even after centuries have passed have been successful in retaining the remnants of their past. The remains and standing structures in shape of monuments, buildings, mosques tombs, temples, Gurdawaras ancient graveyards, springs and either traditions reveal the evidences of their past. In modern day we don't get such a marvelous blend of heritage. But despite public and government apathy these places still speak volumes about their past zenith which undoubtedly would never be surpassed by any other modern day construction. Old city of Srinagar known generally as downtown has its own charm and splendour.

It is a kind of multi faceted museum which attracts lacs of tourists every year. Downtown areas like Zaina Kadal, Urudu Bazar, Saraf Kadal, Rajouri Kadal, Bohri Kadal, Fatah Kadal and other such localities attract people in hordes. Similarly in South Kashmir places like Pampur (the ancient Padam Pur) Awantipura and Bijbehara have their own peculiarity in terms of heritage. Bijbehara, in particular, like Downtown has also been a cynosure for foreign visitors who come here to catch a glimpse of its ancient splendour and archaeological remains in form of temples; mosques and ancient grave yards.

According to Abdul Majid Tak a local resident it is not Bijbehara but is actually Vrijaybor or Vijayvihar which has been wrongly pronounced as Bijbehra. History also says much the same about the place. Baron Huevo, a European traveler was the first researcher who visited the town in 18th century AD. He suggests that the town was actually known as Vijayapura (the city of victory). Another tradition says that Bijbehara derived its name from Vijay Bijiri, a king believed to have ruled it from its neighbourhood in about 67 BC. However, there are scholars who attribute Bijbehara to some Buddhist establishment and believe that some Buddhist Vihara existed somewhere in its vicinity.

About Bijbehara there are traditional sources also where references to it are given. It particularly finds a mention in various travelogues as also written records of the time. However, archaeology has a different story to tell about Bijbehara. As per it the town reveals very interesting sequence of various cultural periods, most of which had been mostly of external in nature. Stein was the first who made the earliest archaeological investigation of the town. However he could not achieve any breakthrough in his investigations. He is learnt to have collected few

Ancient artifacts from the surface of the town. The town got explored in the year 1983 when a major archae-

ological discovery was made at Semithan Plateau on its outskirts. It did not only reveal the cultural past of the town but even opened a new chapter for entire Kashmir. The relics of Greeks, Scythians, Shakas, Kushanas, Mauryans, Sargas, revealed from the site puzzled the local historians, archaeologists and researchers.

It was a new thing for them to know and learn about Greeks. This made them impatient and thus they started trying to explore and know more and more about the heritage wealth of the place. Who were these Greeks, Scythian and Shakas? What was NBP and what were these tiny pieces of silver and copper stamped on either sides? These were some questions which appeared in the minds of the researchers. Their respective questions got answered from the excavator of the site who published a report on his findings soon after making this discovery. The repeat said, Semithan excavation was a step forward in bridging the gap between the Neolithic and Kushan periods in Kashmir.

The finds of proto-Harppen pottery (700-500 BC) 700-500 BC), NBP (500-200) BC and Grecian type pottery and coins (200 BC to 1st century AD) were the magnificent discoveries of the site. The NBP (Northern Black Polished) ware in stratified state was the first discovery of its kind. In the valley the early Iron Age was followed by the advent of

NBP and Indo-Greeks who followed them. The relics were revealed in various layers on the elevated Plateau, known locally "Taskdar". Besides other things one of the layers of the Plateau revealed a polished which carried the name of Manamdar engraved on it, in association with highly advanced silver and copper coins of few Greek, Scythian, Parthian and Shaka rulers.

Menandar, Appollodutus, Hannahs Azes, Azelises, Gondpharas, Saplaries were the names of kings revealed on these finally devised coins. The site also revealed many mysterious sculptures, besides the sculptures of Buddhist and Hindu deities. The art and costumes depicted on these sculptures were undoubtedly of Hellenistic order. Unfortunately all Semithan finds could not be preserved well and the site is still robbed of its treasure troves. Let the government take care of Semithan finds, as Semithan is for historians and archaeologists but a research institution. Care of these finds will shed more light on not only the history of Bijbehara but that of Kashmir also. Indications are that Bijbehara may have remained a Grecian or Scythian city, in light of its finds that could not be clearly deciphered. It undoubtedly has Scythian origin. The word Semithan also looks to have been borrowed from Scythian; which was a city near Balk. The tribe which emerged from Scythia is known as Scythian. They followed Grecian culture and

traditions and ruled several north-western parts of India. In Kashmir there is strong archaeological evidence to suggest that they ruled this land in first century BC; soon after the Greeks rule. These Scythians are called as Indo-Scythians. About four hundred ancient coins dating back to the period were found from valley, which haven't been properly recorded. Despite wonderful discoveries of Semithan, Bijbehara still remains unexplored. The ancient Vijay Pora on its various outskirts carries number of mounds, especially towards the Semithan and Tulkhan areas.

There mounds if explored and excavated would shed some light on the ancient culture of Bijbehara. The Semithan discovery besides other things introduced this ancient town to several European countries, especially to Greece. However, the unfavorable circumstances could not help to exploit its heritage tourism potential.

NATURAL DISASTERS

It is simply tragic that despite progress in society, science, and human knowledge, we have not been able to invent any such instrument that could help us predict natural disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes. I wonder how we can call ourselves advanced when we are not able to monitor the changes that occur beneath our feet. To date mankind has witnessed so many disasters that wiped out innumerable civilizations from the face of earth. But despite our achievements in terms of knowledge and technicality we could do nothing but watch helplessly the vanishing of mankind through natural catastrophes. Owing to relentless pursuit of military technology, we have been able to invent cruise missiles, hydrogen and atom bombs and nuclear weapons but are unable to predict the incoming natural disasters. This shows we are advanced in anti-human technology only and when it comes to human welfare we still live in a primitive world.

It would have been much better and a big achievement for the scientists had they invented such a mechanism which could help us predict Tsunami and earthquake like natural disasters. Unfortunately our nations and scientists are busy with other priorities most of which have no other aim but to eliminate man. For them nuclear weapons and missiles are more important than exploring ways of

predicting natural calamities. The prime objective of our scientists has to date been making of war weapons aimed at eliminating human civilizations. Anti human activities of our scientific community have a long history? Firstly, rich nations the world over vigorously pursued acquisition of atomic technologies and after having acquired the know-how these countries became Atomic Powers. This was done to put pressure on smaller nations.

But when the smaller nations also acquired atomic technologies, the big powers moved further ahead and accumulated nuclear technologies and became Nuclear Powers. This weapon acquisition race continued even during the cold war. Seeing the big powers acquire weapons of mass destruction, the developing nations also joined them and some even succeeded in acquiring these weapons. Few of these new powers are also allegedly helping other countries in going nuclear. Many small countries are now reportedly busy in enriching their respective technologies. The countries which face extreme dearth of even traditional instruments like blankets, tents, hammers, stone cutters etc, needed to help their citizens in emergencies like natural disasters, too are now busy with acquiring nuclear know-how. Though these countries are poor in terms of human welfare, they are highly advanced in warfare. A major portion of the national income of these coun-

tries reportedly goes in acquiring the now-how of nuclear technologies mostly in the name of national security. The pretext before many of these countries is that they have hostile neighbours and any lack in terms of military power would prove detrimental to their security. Whose security anyway; of the people who year after year perish due to natural calamities or of their so called leaders who milk their subjects for their own ends in the name of national security?

Under the garb of national defense these countries acquire nuclear technology. This nuclear technology is acquired for the security and defense of their country for the threat that it faces from other countries. Although nations the world over are prepared to protect their countrymen with military might and nuclear technology, these countries aren't equipped to safeguard their citizens against the impending natural catastrophes. Can we ask our nuclear powers as to what has been done for the threat which their countries face from the nature which is always there? The reply would, perhaps, be a few blankets and food packets which are usually air dropped for the dead.

It is really very shameful for our nuclear powers that though they can provide us security against hostile neighbours, they cannot protect us from the threat that we all face from within the earth. Today countries the world over

have made progress in space research and sent their respective satellites into space. They are also advanced in the communications system but when it comes to earth sciences we are primitive in terms of knowledge. Earth science is perhaps the only field where both the developed and the underdeveloped world is lagging dismally. Reason: till date we have been busy with acquisition of nuclear technology aimed at teaching a lesson to our adversaries.

As far as the science of earth is concerned, almost all the nations of the world have remained backward. Today we only know that the earth's interior is made of hot gasses which kept spinning throughout its evolution. These gases cooled down slowly with the result the surface of earth became cold and hot. Some of the gasses escaped while some were trapped inside its outer surface. Further, that its inside has hot molten material, which is called "magma" which sometimes, due to pressure and heat, forces its way to "the surface. It has a great pressure and bursts with a force hard enough to shake the earth in the area where it erupts. This is perhaps all we know about volcanoes. But when and where will these occur nobody knows because there is no mechanism to know it.

Given the disaster that natural calamities like earthquakes cause, scientists already involved in earth re-

search, need to delve deep into their chosen field so that we are able to know as much about the inside developments of our earth as we know about what is without it. Scientific community needs to go deep into the reasons that cause changes in earth's interior and later result in heavy earthquakes. Timely forecasting and prediction of natural calamities like earthquakes will go a long way in, protecting nations against these disasters. Since disasters take a heavy toll on man, a mechanism of forecasting and prediction needs to be developed. This would ensure safety of mankind: the proclaimed crown of civilization. Saturday's devastation should be a lesson for all of us. It not only killed thousands of persons but also damaged property worth billions. Though dead are dead and can't be saved, those living need to be protected against such catastrophes. We are sanguine the scientific community would pay heed to it.

SUFI SHRINES

Is the Pandable shrine intact or has it been destroyed? The media reports which poured in from Pandable Ashmuqum (South Kashmir) are confusing. Some say that the shrine no more exists as it was burnt down by some unidentified men a few days ago. They say only an uncovered cave and few structures adjacent to it exist at the spot.

The actual shrine which was formed of five types of wooden panels and covered the cave stands damaged, other reports say. There are other reports which followed the earlier ones stating that the shrine was not damaged at all and described the event as nothing but media hype. Well, it can not be merely treated as media hype - something happened at the site. No doubt the main shrine of the saint is still intact at Ashmuqam but everything is not alright at Pandable. The bad news about the site, after all was not wrong - it is learnt that the holy site of the Pandable has been desecrated by some unidentified men. There are reliable reports which suggest that some damage has been done to the structure which covered the Pandable cave. No doubt the structures adjacent to the cave site are safe and secure but the main shrine is reported to have undergone certain damages.

This unfortunate event has shocked many Kashmiri, mostly those who have strong spiritual affection for this saint. Although there are certain people to whom it matters very little but to those who revere shrines and the majority of those who hold the tombs of Sufis and Syeds in high esteem, the event was more painful. These people can not now silently bear all these evil designs. They have been watching the disrespect and desecration of their loved saints for the last few decades. They saw the devastation of Charar-e-Sharief and desecration of Dargah Sharief in 1993. They witnessed all the there ill-unfortunate events patiently and could not utter a single word. The Pandable event is nothing new to them. However, they want to know about the motive behind these unfortunate events which these people are unable to understand.

Pandable is the most significant site which is associated with Zain-ud-Din Reshi (RA). It is next to Ashmuqam and held in very high esteem by the lovers of this saint. It is said that it was here that the Rishi got enlightened after mediating for around 15 years. It is situated at a fine location, which even today is known to be the best abode for mediations. After reaching Ashmuqam, the saint is said to have selected Pandable as the place where he would seek blessings of the Almighty. It is said that there existed a cave (perhaps used in ancient period by some Buddhist

monk for his mediations). During the times of the saint in early 15th century AD, the cave was inhabited by snakes and other wild creatures. When the Reshi reached the cave, he told them that the site had been allotted to saints and requested them to vacate it. The snakes and other wild creatures are known to have then left the cave for the saint.

There are numerous legends associated with this site. The event of killing of a lamb by a selfish shepherd and putting up the blame on the shoulders of the saint also floats from Pandable. Pandable and Ashmuqam sites of Zain-ud-Din Reshi (RA) bewitches not only to the eyes of locals but many foreigner; as well.

The sites of this Reshi require foolproof security because of then-significance. History, legends and myths associated with this cave and shrine have already added a lot to its sensitivity. It is just like the shrine of Yuz Asif (RA) of Khanyar Srinagar where efforts are on to make it a controversial site. The European scholars have been identifying it with a Jewish site and they claim that the holy robe of Prophet Moses (AS) is preserved there. Because of these mysterious legends the shrine is also on the agenda of Europeans. Therefore keeping in view its sensitivity, the entire asserts of Zain-ud-Din Reshi (RA) requires a high cadre security.

This unfortunate land has already lost several glorious heritage sites. Many religious sites have already suffered heavy losses while several disappeared. The most famous shrine of Zain-ud-Din Reshi at Ashmuqam and the holy relics housed in a gallery at the site, besides Carrying spiritual importance are the masterpieces of our classical heritages. The tomb is a wonder of Kashmiri wooden art, its lactic work and ornamentations requires proper safety and security and that would be possible only when modern scientific methods of wood preservations are undertaken on priority basis. Fire extinguishers are needed to be installed all along the tomb complex. The Wakf Board authorities and Reshis of Ashmuqam jointly have the responsibility to preserve the entire site of Ahsmuqam and Pandable. They should be vigilant to defeat the evil designs of the enemy, whosoever it is. By this they would not only attain the blessing of the saint but due compliments from the people. Although the Pandable shrine has suffered some damages as reported, but its sanctity is deeply rooted in Kashmir culture which can never be destroyed by anyone.

DYING HERITAGE

I do not think that Kashmir will ever succeed in safeguarding its 'dying cultural heritage', as there is no one to salvage it. The various government regimes that ruled the State since 1947 have exhibited an indifferent approach towards the Cultural heritage of this land. For them, it has been the "least productive field" and they infact feel that if any investment is made in it that would mean unnecessarily draining the State exchequer. These people, have also been unable to understand the cultural past with most of it either standing; in ruins or buried underground. Under these circumstances where the government itself appears confused as concerns the heritage, how can any one else think of safeguarding it?

No doubt certain cultural heritages were preserved and explored but such preservation works were undertaken during the period of the Maharajas, who promoted various foreign missionaries to help safeguard the heritage of this land. It was during the Maharajas period that several cultural complexes were setup in the State; besides a number of monuments were excavated and identified. During the reign of the Maharajas maximum number of monuments received face-lifts while number of archaeological sites were brought to light. The most outstanding work, which Maharaj as earned out was the establishment

of a world class State Museum at Lal Mandi. It housed the cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir, as also that of its frontier provinces.

Kashmiris shall always remain indebted to the European missionaries who were encouraged by Dogra Maharajas for taking up archaeological research and repairs of various monuments. It is because of their dedicated work that the monumental glory of this land was brought to light.

The first among the European missionaries was Alexander Cunningham who arrived in Kashmir in 1846 soon after the Sikh war. He identified Purandisthana modern Pandrethan, Jyesthesh Vara Martand, Pavdamapura, Pattan and Khonamusha etc.

Sir John Marshal and Nicollas Stein were others who followed Cunningham and initiated archaeological researches and explorations. The cultural activities were prompted smoothly in the first half of the 20th century, but soon after 1947 when National Conference assumed power in Jammu and Kashmir it met with hurdles. This government disbanded the archaeology and monuments of the State by putting them under the care of PWD. The archaeological exploration and excavation works came to a stand still. No archaeological site was put under pres-

ervation net; neither any repairing work was undertaken on any sip of archaeological importance. Monuments of Kashmir were neglected, which led to the collapse of these "ancient relics". Moulana Abul Kalam Azad visited this State in the year 1950. He was the education minister then. He saw the plight of Kashmir monuments and spoke to his counterpart, the state, education minister Pir Muhammad and told him that it is not feasible for any civilized nation to shut t up on such cultural treasures. It was on the recommendations of their education minister that the Central archaeological experts visited the Valley. M S Vatas, a learned cultural expert, prepared a report that came to be known as the "Vatas Recommendations". The State partly' adopted some of his recommendations that to some extent, focused some attention on the monuments here. Some initiatives were taken to revive State archeological sites while the research wing was given a separate identity. During Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq's period cultural activities of the state were revived. Several cultural forums were found besides number of monuments were identified and brought under the preservation net. In the post Sadiq period, the state's cultural activities were once again under dark clouds. The research wing was dropped form the archaeological department and was shifted to Kashmir University where it was put under the look after of State Libraries Department.

The archaeology, museums and research turned into shambles and no Kashmiri ruler showed any interest to reform these pioneer cultural wings. Not to speak of cultural revival, these rulers made fun of it and went on playing jokes with cultural sentiments of this land - sometimes in terms of "Tazeeb Mahal" and sometimes in the name of "Asar Mahal". These days the same joke is being played under the new brand of "Aarinavas". When in 2002 the foundation stone of "Asar Mahal" was laid at Boulevard I was also a spectator. I felt puzzled when the founder of this proposed "Mahal" directed the then Director Museums for removing the foundation stone soon after the function was over. What was it? It was nothing but a joke meant to befool people. The practice still continues. The Mufti Muhammad Sayed government is also indifferent towards our cultural wealth. A year has passed by since this government stated that not only the State museum would be shifted to Harinavas, but it would be developed as major cultural centre of the State. What happened to that plan?

As for my information is concerned since 1986, none of the sites was brought under the State Monuments Preservation Act. No doubt certain archaeological discoveries were made during this period. The Latapura and Kotabal civilizations were found but no major excavation and exploration of these sites has yet been undertaken so

that the hidden treasures could have been brought to light. These two sites will meet, seemingly, the same fate that dozens of such sites have already met.

It is very much clear that the successive governments of the State have hardly shown any interest in the revival of culture and heritage of Kashmir. They have even not recognized this essential field, otherwise these governments would have created a cultural ministry to deal with the cultural and heritage related issues. The non-existence of a cultural ministry in these governments speaks of how much serious these governments have been about culture and heritage.

QASIM KHAN

No doubt that the historical Pir Panjal passage to this Valley was discovered by foreign caravans and tribes a thousand years back before the arrival of the great Mughals, but it was none except the royal Mughal engineers who first Worked on this route and cleared it from Bimber to Hurlpura (Shopian) for the Royal Mughal Caravan to pass. Qasim Khan the governor of Kashmir, served as the first chief engineer and built this road, besides several roads and royal guest houses were also raised at required distances. The history of Kashmir routes reveals that the Mughal Caravan which was guided by their wonderful white coloured horse named Gulfam was the first Mughal Caravan to travel on this road. History bears witness to the fact that it was the month of Rajab 996 AH when Jalal-ud-Din Akbar, was camping at Lahore. He decided to visit Kashmir about which he had heard much praise. Yousuf Khan, was the then governor of the newly annexed province of the Mughal Empire. He was intimated by the royal Caravans journey.

Qasim Khan, another Mughal servant was called to Lahore, where he was entrusted the job of clearing and repairing of the Pir Panjal Pass. (The pass later came to be known as Mughal Shehra because maximum Mughal royal caravans entered the Valley though this route).

Qasim Khan after following the directions engaged thousands of sculptors and cleared the route up to Hurpora (Shopian).

The way was cleared and gateway of Hurpora was elaborately decorated. Then the royal Caravan was invited to pass. At Hurpora extensive arrangements were made to receive the Mughal Caravan and people of all walks of life irrespective of cast, creed and colour who had heard of the proposed visit of the Mughal Caravan gathered at Hurpora with varieties of gifts in their hands. The scene was wonderful, history records. It is said, that in a couple of days the Mughal Caravan reached the first camping ground of Panj Saira (Poonch) to the South of Pir Panjal (Pan) Saria, nowadays represented by few villages of Chandimund, Bahrqmgalla and Posshana. The Panj Sarai was named so, as Mughals had built several inns there. The ruins of those inns still lay scattered in Chandimud area. From here the Caravan proceeded to cross the Pir Panjal and the next day it is said to have reached the top of Panjal called Ratanpir. The Caravan was guided to the Valley by their famous swift, fleet-footed horse called Gul-fam. The Caravan treaded a long journey to Hurpora but the desire of the Caravan to see the valley of Kashmir made things easy for them. It is said that no one had any sign of fear while, entering into the Valley. The Caravan

was accorded a splendid welcome at Hurpora. Besides, the Kashmir Governor, nobles, poets, writers, intellectuals and musicians who already gathered at Hurpora with their variety of gifts welcomed the royal Caravan. The next day, the Caravan is said to have reached Srinagar. It was 25th of Rajab, 996 AH when Akbar arrived in Srinagar. A big congregation was held at Bagh-e-Hussain (the present day Khanqah-e-Naksh Bandia). He was accompanied by Mughal nobles and soldiers. Akbar delivered his first address at Bagh-e-Hussain and in his speech to Kashmiris, he directed his forces not to enter or stay in any Kashmiri house, Akbar then visited Shahab-ud-Din Pora.

In Kashmir, he is said to have granted high posts and Jagirs to many Kashmiris from Srinagar. Akbar went to Pampore and then to Bijbehara and from there he left for Nandmarg to enjoy the beauty of nature (Nandmarg is situated below the feet of famous Kokernag to the southwest of Kashmir).

This was Jala-ud-Din's first visiting of Kashmir. He is said to have spent about a month in Kashmir and then Qasim Khan was again directed to clear the way back to Lahore. Gulfam who with his master also remained here for a month was then driven back to Lahore the way it had entered the Valley.

MUGHAL ROAD

As the government now seems all set to undertake the construction of Mughal route, for the purpose preparations are underway to resume the work as soon as possible. The construction of the route is the most welcome step. It will not only serve as an alternative national highway road link but shall also connect Poonch and Rajouri districts of the State directly with the summer capital of Srinagar.

The construction of this route shall also restore an ancient communication link which once connected Kashmir valley with the northern cities of undivided India

Mughal route is not merely a surface communication link but it served as a major link to different olden civilizations. The road itself is a forgotten history, which has a great archaeological and historical significance.

Besides connecting civilization, the road served as the first trade route to the Valley. It is said that salt was imported to the Valley from the salt ranges of Punjab through this route. The route carries a long history. There, are various interesting historical events, legends and archaeological facts associated with this route. The government should have kept any provision for restoration of the routes history and monumental glory in its construction

plans? The constructions of the route is very important but preserving its historical identity is more important. There are certain people who fear that the construction of this route may disturb the history of this route and damage its monumental glory.

Their fear is genuine, to some extent. They say so over their past experience when in early seventies construction of this route was undertaken. There were attempts to change the history of the route. Although only few kilometers of this route were then made pliable for vehicles but its bridges and culverts were dedicated to few contemporary political faces. The historical legends associated with this route were altogether neglected which in no way was fair. It is because of this past experience people fear that the construction work of this route may disturb the original history, legends and archaeology of the route.

Their demand is that while constructing the route, its basic explorers and builders should not be forgotten but certain portions of the road should be post humously dedicated to their name.

Besides the legends and archeological evidences associated with the route shall also be kept intact and not disturbed in any manner. Besides, the history and legends attributed to it, need to be restored in the light of their re-

spective historical perspective.

The history of the route says that in earlier times it was mainly a mountain pass, which according to researches was discovered by a Hepthilite king Miharkula.

This king is learnt to have lost 101 elephants on this route. The spot where this king lost his elephants still preserves its name and is known as the (Hasvanij) elephant's forest. Another king Avanti Varman (855-883) is said to have built the first which tower on the route at the Hurple (the ancient Surpura).

This Hurple was then also called Diamond City. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah) is learnt to have built the first colony on this route in 1450 AD. He is known to have also constructed the first gate at Hurple, and this gate was known as (Illahi Darwaza) "The-Gate of the Lord".

Mughal rulers were first builders of the route. They not only constructed the route but also raised several rest houses at requisite distances of the route. Qasim Khan was the first engineer of the route, who was assigned the job of clearance and repairing of the Pirpanchal Pass. He is said to have engaged thousands of sculptors and cleared the route from Lahore to Hurple for his master Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Akbar, After Mughals, Durrannies and Sikhs also arrived through this route and maintained it

till Dogra period (1846 AD). It was during Dogra period that Jehlum valley route and Banihal routes were made motorable, while as Mughal road was neglected. However, the route continued to serve as a trade link between Shopian and Poonch regions for a late period. Most of the cattle wealth trade evolved through this route, which despite of several odds, still continues. Now when steps are taken to make the route motorable it is hoped that trade between Poonch and Kashmir valley will achieve new heights. The road which displays a very exquisite monumental glory shall open up new avenues for the Sand's heritage tourism.

POMPOSH

Lotus plant has almost disappeared from the wet lands of the Valley. Nowadays it is found only in few marshy lands of Srinagar's lakes. Much of the little left evidence of this plant is available in the, Nagin Lake. But when we talk of Lotus flower as a symbol it seems that this flower has served as the most ancient symbol of this land; which has attracted the attention of local artists since times immorial: It would not be wrong to say that this flower is as old as the human civilization in Kashmir.

The Lotus appears among historical artifacts to a large extent. As a matter of fact, it is found stamped on most of the artifacts of ancient Kashmir: It is seen in various sizes, shapes and designs on bricks, stones, clay objects, stone and bronze images, stone and wooden pillars, mihrabs and windows.

Lotus as a living plant may not survive for long now due to the ever-increasing water pollution, but its symbolic reminiscences on the cultural heritage of the land will definitely accompany us for a long time to come. It will always remind of its being the ancient water plant of Kashmir, which connected civilizations for a very long period.

These days Kashmiri artisans may have forgotten the ancestral linkages with this Flower, but archaeological

discoveries reminds us of these ancient links and project the picture of the Kashmiri artist sharing a wonderful bond, an ancient relationship of softs, with the Lotus flower.

Lotus is locally known as Pomposh. It is a tiny water plant, which bears a beautiful flower. Although many foreigners have shown, great affinity and interest with this flower but of Kashmiri people it does not hold much importance. Kashmiris treat it as one of the common flowers. Perhaps they have no information about the cultural past of this flower.

Lotus first made its symbolic appearance on Kashmiri baked bricks. These are large bricks which archaeologists call "terracotta tiles", dating back to the 1st and 2nd century AD. On these tiles this flower symbol was stamped in an excellent order. There is great archaeological significance associated with this flower motif-that speaks of its popularity among ancient civilizations.

The recent archaeological discovery of some unknown civilization at Kotbal also revealed the five evidences of this motif where it was seen stamped on most of the large bricks exhumed from this site. M S Zahid the excavator of Kotbal site writes in his reports, "Lotus motif has dominated all other motifs so far revealed from the excavation of the site. The tile pavement found at the site de-

picted a full-blown lotus motif at the centre formed of terracotta (baked brick tile) and all the other large bricks, used in formation of the courtyard bear the symbol in various designs. Sometimes it as depicted as a full-blown-flower and sometimes disheveled into numerous petals. These petals are stamped over these bricks in various forms. On few bricks the motif has been shown in lotus stuck form. This flower symbol is seen on most of the bricks of the pavement".

The motif of lotus was for the first time cited by Ram Chand Kak in year 1921 when he excavated the Buddhist site of Harwan. He found the lotus symbol stamped in a variety of designs on number of large bricks use din buildings of the courtyard of Harwan stupas. The motif of lotus was also found from the archaeological sites of Kral Cheek, Takiyabal Ahan, Hutmur, Martanec, Gurriet and Kamishpura.

All these sites revealed a civilization, which archaeologists believe had flourished here in early centuries of the Christian era. It means that about two thousand years back, lotus flower attained its popularity in artisan circles of this land. So it was maximally stamped on the ancient artifacts of the land.

The lotus motif continued to carve its history in the

medieval and Muslim periods of the land. Though the motif was first stamped on terracotta tiles wherefrom it started its artistic journey, it began to appear on stone in later periods. It served as the pedestal motif for various Hindu and Muslim sculptures.

Buddha, Shiva and Vishnu, in carvings and statues were placed on a throne designed like a lotus. It got introduced into the ceiling of temples, and henceforth Lotus design ceilings were used to cover up the chambers of various shrines.

The lotus-design remains of temples are still seen at Pandrethan and Kathair localities of the Valley.

During the Muslim period it traversed into patterns of j wood. It was carved into mihrabs, columns and ceilings. No doubt that in Muslim period all other plants and flowers were also used in various craft designs, but the journey which lotus flower made in Kashmiri art and craft is perhaps outstanding and speaks volumes about its ancient popularity. Now when this plant has come under the threat of heavy pollution steps are needed to be taken to save this plant from extinction.

The experts in plant life can be consulted for preservation of lotus. Archeologists can merely save its stamped or carved motifs on our cultural material – just the symbol.

HERITAGE VILLAGE

Beyond doubt we can create many model villages, as government, of India has taken up number of schemes for upliftment of rural areas. More than seventy per cent of that population of India lives in villages and as such human welfare of people living in these areas is the priority for every Indian government. In this context the State government has been receiving enough funding for its rural development programmes under various schemes. Thus creating few or many models villages is not any distant dream. We can in forthcoming decades have number of model villages.

What is difficult for us is that we cannot even think of preserving any heritage village - a village which could exhibit our glorious culture and ethos; a village which could represent our basic identity; a village where we would have traditional Yarbal, Mohel to Kanz, Zapan, Tathul, Tharpend (cooked rice distribution site), Guriwaan (large cowshed), Pahel Thikana (Cattle Shed), Telawoun (oil mill); a village where religion, social and economic tolerance would prevail; where there would be no distinction between the rich and the poor, and between a peer and Sheikh; where all religions and their respective thoughts would be revered well.

A heritage village where all shrines spread the message of love and brotherhood; a village where prayers are offered for every body without any religious or social consideration; a village where Haak Bath serves as the traditional diet, besides where mother will be known as Moj, Father as Mole, uncle as Kak and so on. Is this possible in the 21st century? It appears to be a difficult task, as it is often easy to dismantle any olden structure and to raise a new one rather than to restore the old structure. Many Europeans have done this and they have been successful in preserving the traditional villages of Europe by turning them into village museums. In our land, we have developed few villages as model villages but we have not even thought of creating any heritage village, which could depict the past life of village people.

It is true that every aspect of our olden culture cannot be possibly preserved when there is cultural invasion and people are readily accepting the new culture. The old one has to go and provide space for the novel one. Many people opine that it is only language, which basically identifies a nation and if language is saved that means a nation's identity is saved. I do not agree with these experts fully. Of course language plays a vital role in bringing people of a community together but there are-certain other elements Which strengthen the identity of a particular com-

munity. These include common living traditions, dresses, diets, beliefs, rituals, myths and legends, music and other tastes. A community which, besides common language, also shares a common culture is identified as a separate nation. Kashmiris irrespective of different religious beliefs and thoughts share a common culture. A culture which, some experts believe is distinctive in several ways. It can be good as well as bad but in both ways it is Kashmiri.

In the days of yore, Kashmiri people lived a distinctive life. They shared a common language called "Koshur". They shared a uniform architecture called "Ivandar Jaie" and during winters they lived in its ground storey and in spring on its upper story (Kani). They shared a common diet of rice and vegetables (both green as well as dry) and the most favorite dishes included, Tumla Sath, Seser Gogi, Wopal Hawk, Abuj, Hend, Gul, Krach, Alahachi and Waganhachi, besides Kahwa and Noon Chai.

You may not believe but I have seen with my eyes my Kashmiri friends parceling dry vegetables like Alahaci, Wanganhachi and Wopal Hawk to their Kashmiri relatives living outside the State since the eruption of turmoil.

So it is not only language but other traditions too that identify a particular community. It is their villages and towns that symbolize their living systems. Unfortunately

we have lost most of the traditional villages to new cultures. I do not think that any such village exists in our land, which could still depict our olden traditions. If there is any such village that can be preserved as a heritage village which could then serve as a mirror of our past. It could not only help in preserving our olden culture but shall also boost our heritage tourism.

Creation of model villages is a good step towards rural development but preserving few old villages as heritage villages would be a great step towards our cultural heritage. The State government, if it intends, can do it by identifying any village where olden architecture, arts, crafts, traditions and sincerity and simplicity still prevail; where people have not forgotten their traditional social values and have not become the slaves of European culture.

ANCIENT MONUMENTS

The ancient monuments of Kashmir are undoubtedly an exquisite and great architectural treasure, scattered all over Kashmir, these monuments represent the grace and zenith of classical architectural styles, which were prevalent in Kashmir at various periods of history.

Broadly speaking, Kashmir monuments can be divided into three major styles - terra-cotta, stone and brick and wooden style. The beginnings of the architectural trends in Kashmir are linked with terra-cotta orders. These are the foundations excavated at Harwan, Ushkar, Hutmura, Hionar Wangdoor and Kotbal sites in the Valley. These sites have been identified as the ruins of Buddhist stupas and caityas. These early foundations are built of terra-cotta tiles and bear varied local and foreign motifs on their obverses.

These tiles are square and quadrangular shaped and date back to early centuries of the Christian era.

Excavations made at Harwan, 9 kms from Lal Chowk, have the foundation of a monastic establishment with a stupa and caitya, which correspond to the stupa courts at Gandhara. The stupa is square in plan, with its base in three tiers with a flight of steps on its western side. The whole structure is contained within an open quadrangle.

gle with its brilliant and fascinating large seized terra-cotta tiles and pebbles walls. Harwan ruins carry master architectural designs of the earlier period. Other earlier foundations of terra-cotta order were excavated from various places of Lidder valley in Anantnag district. However, the terra-cotta used in these sites is in no way so well finished and well carved as the one found at Harwan.

Stone architecture of Kashmir comprises of Hindus stone temples. It is so marvelous that it at once attracts the attention of every tourist and archeologist. Martand, Awantipura, Pattan, Parhaspura ruins are some of the master architectural ruins of this style built of massive stones with Greek and Roman features, these monuments represent the graceful stone architecture prevalent in Kashmir in the medieval times.

The brick and wooden architecture is prominently associated with the Muslim rule in Kashmir. It seems that Sultan Zain-ul-Abidine, who ruled Kashmir in the 15th Century, encouraged and patronized the wooden architecture in Kashmir. Srivara, his court historian, gives along list of buildings that were constructed in brick and wood Mirza Haider Daughlat records that Zain-ul Abidine built a colossal palace, Zainadab, all on wood at Zainagir and also one on the Island in the Wular Lake. About the Sultan's palace in the capital, the Mirza records, "it has twelve storeyes,

some of which have 50 rooms, halls and corridors." The whole of this lofty structure is built of wood. Today no ruins of that wonder are evident. The place as per historical evidence was later on set on fire by the Chaks who ruled Kashmir after Zain-ul-Abidine.

Kashmir has still preserved several fine brick and wooden architectures of the Muslim period. The Khanqah of Shah Hamdan, the mosque of Madin Sahib, the Tomb of Zain-ul-Abidine's mother, Jamia Masjid, Khanqah Naqashbandi (RA), Ziarat of Dastagir Sahib (RA), are some of these masterpieces in brick and wooden styles that are situated in Srinagar city.

These are other mosques, and Ziarats of Kashmiri Saints and Sayids in the Valley that symbolize the traditional wooden architecture of Kashmir of the 17th and 18th century. Most of the Ziarats carry brilliant latticework, built of small pieces of wood arranged in various geometric forms so as to display their edges. Latticework is an extraordinary art that adorned almost all the Muslim shrines existing in urban and rural areas of Kashmir.

Kashmiri's brilliant architectural edifices, which are an integral part of our glorious cultural heritage, are unfortunately in a state of disarray.

Almost all the leading Muslim shrines are being

looked after by the Waqaf. The shrines situated in rural and far-flung areas of Kashmir are under the care of voluntary organizations. The State department of Archeology has been entrusted with the job and the monuments are being maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Almost all the Muslim shrines have donation boxes at the main entrance, where people offer their nazarans and donations.

It is through this income that the Ziarats are maintained. "We cannot afford any big project to renovate or repair these neglected shrines due to limited resources", says the Chairman of Al Shamus Trust at Parigam, Anantnag. As a result, the shrine has suffered extensively, losing some of its ancient designs and its pristine grandeur as well. The shrine's walls carried patterns in papier machie, which were damaged due to negligence. They were replaced by cement plastering. Consequently, the original glory of the shrines is no more.

This is not the only monument that has faced public apathy. There are several other monuments which lie in a dilapidated state. The Archeology department has no scheme of providing any financial assistance to these voluntary organizations for looking after Kashmir's ancient monuments. Even technical assistance is not being pro-

vided to them.

Vandalism goes on unchecked at these sites. The ruins of several monuments are veiled by bushes and plants, the roots of which are internally damaging the standing structures.

At several places, local people with their own effort have come up with reconstructions and are dismantling the old structure.

But in the course of reconstructions they have neglected the traditional styles.

At several other sites, new concrete shrine have replaced the traditional wooden structure For instance, at Qaimah in Kulgam there was a very wonderful Rishi shrine adorned with beautiful wooden designs. This shines was dismantled by locals and a new concrete structure was raised there some time ago and that too in a different style.

In several Muslim shines, the wooden panels have given way to modern type glass panels formed of small and beautiful carved wooden pieces Not only this, but in many other shrines the chosen columns have been replaced by concrete ones. This we see at Ziarat Semnani at Kulgam, Ziarat Reshi at Anantnag and other places.

Several of these shrines have lost even in the Khatamband type ceiling too. This Khatamband type ceiling is a typical Kashmiri style and is formed of well finished piece of wood arranged in various designs.

The condition of national monuments maintained by ASI is also not so good. The Badshah's tomb and Mazar-e-Sultan are totally neglected. The historical graveyard of renowned Kashmiri Sultans is very poorly maintained. As a result the beautiful epigraphic specimens on Badshah's and Sultan Sikander's graves are lost. The stone inscriptions on the grave of Mirza Haider Dauglat have also broken into pieces. The walls encircling this historical graveyard are in ruins and ASI authorities with their campus at Jammu have been silently watching these monuments wither away.

BALIYAR

After the last year's impressive discovery of a major Buddhist site of Lalitaditya's period of Latipura (Pampore), the archaeologists of State Archaeology Department are learnt to have cited one more Buddhist site at Baliyar in the same province of South Kashmir. It is learnt that besides, few surface finds, ancient pottery and stone image of a Buddhist deity were, few days back, recovered from the site. These objects, as per the views of expert pertain to Buddhist culture and belong to ancient period.

M S Zahid, Deputy Director Archaeology, who led the exploration team to Baliyar said, "During the construction work of Baliyar spring, the labourers encountered few antiquities. These artifacts were later brought into our notice. It included few pottery objects and a magnificent stone image of some Buddhist deity."

These artifacts were collected by the officer who made several visits to the site and investigated the finds. While talking about the finds, Zahid said that the Buddhist image is shown seated on a lotus pattern pedestal with right leg placed down to the base of the pedestal and left curved to the right; its hands are missing. "So me attributes which a Buddhist deity usually holds are not visible in this figure."

However, he said, the figure is elaborately crowned and finally finished with its head treated as one of the best sculptures of Kashmir.

The pottery objects found at the site, he said, included few fragmentary pieces of utensils usually used by the olden people in their respective households.

About the site, Zahid said that the finds were encountered near a spring, which has a fine location. The surface finds and artifacts recovered from the site suggested that it has been an important site for Buddhists during their presence in the glorious Valley of Kashmir.

The village Baliyar is situated near Marhama, Sangam which is adjacent to the Semithan archaeological site which was excavated in 1983.

The Semithan finds bridged the gaps of ancient history of Kashmir. It revealed a chronological order of various periods consisting mostly of historic ones. The periods which were brought to light by Semithan finds consisted of Mauryans, Sungas, Greeks, Kushans, Seythians and so on.

Semithan archaeological site was fortunate as it faced a full-fledged excavation and a proper study.

The Baliyar finds are still in initial phase of explora-

tion which is yet to be completed. The site is yet to face proper trial dig. It would be only after the proper trial excavation that the site will reveal its significance if it has any for the archaeologists, historians and Buddhists.

So far the location of the site is concerned, no doubt it has a 'find' location and is adjacent to more historic sites. The name of the village itself looks a historic one, perhaps it is the corrupt form of the name 'Bai Vihar' which it presumed shall have been the ancient name of the site.

It is most possible that the place in the ancient periods might have been named as 'Bal Viyar'. Viyar is the name of a Buddhist shrine. This Viyar gradually may have reached to us as 'Yar' and so the Balviyar late came to be pronounced as 'Baliyar'.

There are several places having 'Yar' in their names - like Sursyar, Buniyar, Khanyar, Vijayyar. Most of the scholars believe that 'Yar' is the corrupt form of 'Vihar'. At many such places, archaeologists have also come across the remains of Buddhist shrines, which corroborate the views of various scholars.

Baliyar, also carries 'Yar', so it is most possible that there existed some Buddhist Vihar in ancient times and the Vihar to us reached only as 'Yar' i.e. 'Baliyar'.

And now when the archaeologists have also found artifacts of Buddhist culture at the site, it can be said or presumed that some Vihar existed at the site.

The site requires proper study which is possible only after some trial excavations are carried at the site. The State Archeology Department is hoped shall undertake a major trial dig of the site so that the mysteries surrounding the Baliyar site are unraveled.

KOTBAL DISCOVERY

Much has been already written and said about the archaeological discovery of Kotbal Anantnag. Its excavators called it "remains of some unknown civilization". The discovery revealed a handsome tile pavement formed of brilliantly stamped major bricks (tiles) depicting a variety of certain natural and mythical motifs. Besides these motifs the tiles also carried inscribed numerals in classical Kharoshti script. The entire tile pavement which was brought to light at the site carried in this centers full-blown lotus, made of carved bricks.

It was really a remarkable archaeological discovery; which had brought to light certain new elements besides collaborating several known facts of ancient Kashmir. However, there are certain questions which have remained unanswered. A period of about three months passed when this discovery was made, the media carried several reports and news stories about this discovery. It was reported as a major archaeological break through in the archaeological discovery of the land which as per the views of the experts carried significant historical importance. Despite of nice reporting of this event, the media could not raise the main question about the Kotbal finds. The most significant fact which everybody would like to know is that who were the people who founded the Kotbal settlement and what was

the purpose of finding such settlements.

If I am not wrong most of you like me may be anxious to know these two important facts. As it is in every bodies mind to know the unknown facts and events. No doubt, remains of some manmade structure were, found at the site and it was an exciting event in itself but to know about its builders and purpose is more exciting.

It is not so easy to trace out the founders of any ancient settlement in circumstances. When one has no sufficient evidences one has to build his hypotheses mostly on assumptions. Same is the case with Kotbal finds. No sufficient data is available to analyze the people or tribe who had built it.

Let us first try to trace out the purpose of Kotbal finds. Most of the scholars have agreed that the finds belonged to the period when Harwan settlement has either flourished or was-yet to flourish. It was the period when Kashmir was under the able rule of Kushan dynasty. These people ruled the land 1st century AD to 4th Century AD. It means that Kotbal settlement has been found in between this period. What could have been the purpose of this settlement? It is as a difficult task to find tins. It has not been a habitation site as the site has not revealed even a single artifact of that nature. Raising a beautiful tile pavement

that of highly advanced technology on a remote plateau at such a height is really surprising, which means that it has definitely served some religious or social purpose of its settlers. Many experts view that it were Buddhists who used to make such tile pavements in far off lands of the valley, where as per their view they used to hence any holy relic of Lord Buddha. There are other scholars who view that not the Buddhists but people of foreign lands (mostly Persian) who arrived here in tribes during ancient periods used to build such pavements which suited their religions beliefs well. If these two opinions are taken into account than one can day that either Buddhist or some Persian people have raised such tiles pavements: Kotbal type of tile pavements have earlier been discovered at Harwan and Hutmir sites of the valley. Besides such type of finds have also been discovered in Taxila (Pakistan).

The period is same that of Kushan who ruled the empire from Kabul to Bengal from 1st century AD to 4th century AD. It can also be said that Kushan who were masters of art might have built these pavements, either for Buddhists or for their foreign guests. One thing is very much clear that is the builders of these pavements have been the people of some advanced race. Had Kushans or some foreign people formed such pavements it requires further debate. The human motifs depicted on these tiles clearly speaks of highly advanced civilization.

ANIMAL KINGDOM

The valley once preserved a very rich heritage of animal kingdom. It was famous for its animal and bird, size and varieties, which fence offered a good health and excitement to European and Indian tourists. The foreign sportsmen used to enjoy this beauty. The local shikaries also played the game. In the beautiful writers the local shikaries used to make the prey of wild birds and animals. It is said that these birds were first driven on to the soft snow and then caught in blankets.

The local people enjoyed the winter by catching the wild birds. There was a common practice to attract the birds that was spreading of grains.

The respective grains which suited to different birds was spread on the ground under a basket and as soon the birds entered the basket from the space already left open, the basket was pushed over the birds. It sometimes would catch many while sometimes few. It was just a play enjoyed mostly by local villagers. The herdman also used the similar practice but instead of catching birds, they used to shoot and killing some and wounding many. Killing of the wilds in Kashmir was a play which Rajas and Maharajas encouraged. They had made it a free game to promote the tourism. Except few preserves the shooters were al-

lowed to shoot freely. It is said that in state preserves, the European hunters were allowed to shoot only after certain permissions were sought from wild life authorities.

Hundreds of wilds are recorded were killed everyday in the chilly winters during Rajas and Maharajs period. But as the size was so large that still thousands of wilds lived in valley forests. People watched their movements and many wilds had become popular in local folk tales. Shal Kaky Sat Kak, Hapat Kak, Lah Kak, Roosket, Ram Hun are well mentioned in local proverbs and tales. The recitation of wild animal tales to children was a common feature of almost, every Kashmiri family. Shal Kak badh-Hu Yeme Lari pheer was the most popular tales of old Kashmir. It was all about the Jackal which locally is known as Shal. Kashmiri children used to listen it carefully and then repeat to their friends. Jackal, Leopard, Bear, Bara Singh, Ibex, Markhoor, Musk Deer were certain few popular wilds for Kashmiris.

Leopard: It is locally known by the name of Suh. Tigers and lions are not found in Kashmir. What we see is few varieties of leopards - Snow Leopard and Snow Lynx, locally known as Safed Suh and Khar Suh. In olden times Kashmiris believed that Suh used to attend the respective Sofi Shrines in their localities on every Thursday nights to attain spiritual aids.

Bear: Black Bear is locally known as Bomba Haput and Red Bear as Kani Haput. The Kashmiris have many proverbs about the bear, all founded on the supposed stupidity of the animal. Hapat - Yaras or the friendship of a bear always leads a man into trouble through the blundering of his friend.

Jackal: The local name for this animal is Shal. It is most common in the valley. Besides forests, Shal lives in valley plains too. It moves in herds in evenings of autumn on vacant rice fields, and mostly barks in evenings. Its sounds are taken as good for prosperous agricultural fields. Kashmiri folk tales are full of stories about Shal.

Bara Singh: The Bara Singh is known in Kashmiri as Hahgul, a name said to have been given on account of the Bara Singh's love for horse chestnuts. It is one of the most esteemed hunting animals of the land. Its horns are precious and meat very delicious. This animal suffered lot at the hands of sportsmen and hunters that it is near extinction. It is said that Hangul sheds its horns at the end of the March and makes his way to the high mountains above the forest line and does not return till its horns resurface in autumn.

Ibex: The most extinct wild of the land is known as Ibex. Kail for Kashmiris its horns are longer, more curved

and more tapering. The specie is famous for Shahtoos wool, used in making of best quality of shawls. This animal would be earlier found in Lidder Valley, Sind and Lolab areas of the valley. Lawrence says that he saw a herd of small Ibex at Aroo in Pahalgam in 1892.

Mar Khood: Snake eater, another wild known to Kashmiris as Mar Khood is an enormous goat with two turns, sometimes nearly three, in the spiral of the horns. It has also become extinct in valley heights.

Musk Deer: Known as Rousket is another popular animal of the land. It is famous for pod (nafa) which contains a soft, brownish matter. It is very little animal and has mostly disappeared. It is now only seen in few state preserves.

Ram Hun: Is the name given to Wolf by Kashmiris. Colonel Ward, a European wild life expert says that there are very few wolves found in Kashmir. He had sleep a few wolves at the foot of the hills near Pandrethan in year 1887. There is no other evidence of any another wolf reported from the valley. Fox known to Kashmiris as Loh has also disappeared from its original habitats.

Besides, this wonderful animal kingdom the land also possessed a very rich bird Kingdom, let us talk about few popular birds of the land in any next write up under column heritage contours.

MONUMENTAL GLORY

Almost everyone knows that Kashmir, since the past few decades, has become the focus of world community but there are very few people who know that this land attracted attention of world civilizations centuries ago.

The ancient mountain passes and passages were discovered to enter into this land. These passages gradually developed as routes, which paved way for various caravans from the exteriors to enter this glorious land. These routes played a very important role in the economic and political fields of the Valley. There are hundreds of such routes recorded in historical accounts which connected this land with its different divisions and rest of the world.

Many historians have worked on these routes - Bates, in his Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh gives a detailed account of these historical routes; Frederic Drew, another European traveler has recorded about thirty major routes of Kashmir and its adjoining territories.

The Jehlum Valley route is one the ancient routes of the Valley which finds mention in old Kashmiri records; the route was developed as a cart-road in 1890 in the period of Maharaja Pratap Singh and connected this land with the rail-head of Rawalpandi.

The road, besides its scenic beauty, also exhibit-

Monumental Glory

ed ancient monumental glory all along which spoke of its golden splendor. Various ruins of ancient monuments can be seen on it, even today.

The historical sites and monuments located on this route are as follows:

Kanispura

The archeological evidence of the ancient Kanshipura was brought to light by ASI at modern Kanshipura Baramullah only few years back. These finds are dated to 1st century AD which corresponds to the period of Kanishka. The ancient Kanishpura is believed to have been founded by king Kanishka.

Uhskar

To the left of the road near Baramulla is another historical site known as Uhskar. The remains of a Buddhist stupa are found scattered all along the ground. This site is also believed to have been founded by another Kushan king called Huvihka,

Parashpura

The ruins of this olden capital city of Kashmir, locally known as "Kanishahr" is located on the plateau of Parashpura Diver about 23 kms from Srinagar. The ruins have been corresponded with Lalitaditya's period dating

back to the 8th century AD. There are remnants of several massive stone structures and the most impressive is the plinth of Rajavehara, the Royal Monastery.

Tapar

To the left of the Jehlum valley route, few kilometers from Pattan, is located Taper. Archaeological ruins of some ancient Buddhist stupa are found here. Raja Pratapaditya is believed to have built this wonderful structure.

Buniyar and Dethamandir

These two monuments are located on the Jehlum valley route near Rampur and Uri, respectively. They are of equal elegance. Their rectangular courtyards surrounded by a classical peristyle with impressive columns and a gateway. Built of finely chiseled 1 massive stones these are worth a glance. The ruins are believed to have been built by some Hindu or Buddhist Raja of Kashmir in 8th Century AD.

Archaeological remains of Pattan

There are two archaeological monuments of Shan-karravarman's period seen in the historical town of Pattan. These are standing ruins which also speak about the acumen of classical craftsmanship of ancient Kashmir. Besides these archaeological monuments there are other historical sites related with this route. These included Brit-

ish and Maharaja period link roads, bridges, milestones and calvats. Lalpul, Chokti, Kohala Bridge is few of the sites which remind us of British and Pattan workers who worked on this route in the preparation era. These archaeological sites and monuments, laid in wonderful sequence all along the road, are wonders in their own. These ruins tell a long story of this route, which does not date back to decades or centuries but eons. The route is a wonderful sight for visitors who can peep into the glorious past of this land, while examining the road in detail. The building and engineering skills of ancient Kashmiris are quite distinguishable around here. These monuments stand as living evidence of the local talent which flourished in the olden ages. These sites, if brought under tourist preview shall definitely increase tourist inflow into the Valley. Now when the lost splendour of this road is being gradually restored, it is hoped that the monumental glory all along the route shall also be explored for the growing tourist industry of the State.

Besides trade and commerce, security concerns of the British are believed to have served as the main reasons, which facilitated the construction of the Jehlum Valley cart road, according to historical records. The road which connected Kashmir valley with the Rawalpandi rail head is recorded to have been built under certain politi-

cal motives, which the British exercised in Kashmir. The British, who virtually controlled the administration of the State, are learnt to have built the road for transferring their cantonment to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. Research undertaken by historians suggests that by the end of the 19th century Kashmir had acquired an importance in the context of the Anglo-Russian strategy in Asia. It was the period when British had felt uneasy by the advance of the Russians into Central Asia. Biscoe, the British writer and historian in his monumental book, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, while writing about this historical route says, "The British were menaced by Russian advance in Central Asia and it was necessary, that we should have a road for our troops in order to resist if necessary, any attack from that quarter".

The British Indian government controlled the administration of the State through their Resident at Srinagar. This Resident is learnt to have inspired Maharaja Pratap Singh to undertake the project of linking the Valley with nearest rail-head of Rawalpindi which was hardly at a distance of 200 miles from Srinagar. For taking up this project, the Maharaja is believed to have been provided not only technical aid from the British but the latter have even funded this project. And thus, an important cantonment was carried into Srinagar via this route.

KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

Much has already been said and written about promotion of Kashmiri language and many scholars have been advocating various scripts for its proper promotion. Some say that Sharda is the proper script for this language; they claim that the classical Kashmiri was written in Sharda characters. Many suggest Devnagir script while most of the scholars feel good with present script there are many scholars who for lost several years have been advocating Roman script for this language. They view that it would make this language easy for writing and understanding besides it would also introduce it to the outside world.

All these experts may be right in their respective thinking but it is not necessary that all would agree with them. Every body has got his own understanding but no body would deny it that "Kashmiri language in its ancient periods has never severed as an official language, infact it was the language of common people and very faraway from royal patronage.

Unfortunately, this language like many other languages had no proper script in which it could have been written properly.

It was Sanskrit and Persians languages which not only influenced its vocabularies but as well as provided

some scriptural mechanism for its writing purpose. The earliest evidences of Kashmiri written language is either found in nagri or in Sharda. Perhaps Kalhan was first who provided some space to Kashmiri proverbs in his Rajtaranni which is written in Sanskritised versions. For instance we have references to the well known Kashmir proverbs. "No Shin Chhu Galan Prains Shins" the new snow melts the old one similarly there is Kashmiri idiom used by Kalhana, "myae ti thavanas na" (he destroyed him and his house till the very earth). It means that Kashmiri had become the popular language of this land long before Kalhans 12th century AD, it was because of it's that popularity, Kalhana also introduced its few proverbs in his monumental work of Rajtarangni. Many scholars view Mahanay Prakash of Siti Kantha as earliest classical Kashmiri work. It was written hundred years after Kalhana. This Mahanay Prakash was also full of Sanskrit words. It was written in Nagri letters. In 14th century AD Lal Ded appeared on the scene. Perhaps she was the first poet who poured forth her heart, rich in spiritual and mystic experience in Kashmiri verse. However, she could not write her lyrics and it was in the end of 17th century AD, Bhas Kara Rajanaka put her lyrics in writing. These are written in Sharda characters, with the advent of Islam in 14th century AD, the Sanskrit which has been serving as the official language of the land was replaced by Persian. Persian became the official and Court

language of this land. Like Sanskrit, Persian language not only influenced the Kashmiri language but also provided Persian script for its writing, Sanskrit versions declined and they went on providing space for Persian and Arabic language and scripts. During Muslim period Kashmiri language progressed from spoken language to written language, but its writing purpose remained limited up to its literature while all other routine businesses were carried in Persian. The Kashmiri Peers and Pandiths became the masters of Persian. It became the major medium where in all documents, revenue records, currency notes court proceedings official business was carried in. Learning of Persian in Kashmir once was treated as learning of education.

Kashmiri language never served as official language of this land, no any other business except the prose and poetry was written in this language. There is no any evidence of any document to had ever been written in this language, but despite of its non-official status, the language served as the main spoken language of this land. It is very easy to speak and very sweet to the talk but when it comes the turn of writing and reading it becomes a difficult task because it has no proper script, its present script, has been derived from Persian language but various difficult sounds have; been added to it to make it suitable for this

language. It is because of this reason that many scholars have been advocating various easy scripts of promotion of this language. I have in my mind one classical script which I feel can, suit well to this language. It is Kharoshti script which is so easy and beautiful that everybody would like to learn it. Just like Persian and Arabic, this script is written from left to tight. It is of Aramaic order. It is also syllabic, where each character represents a complete syllable and to form a complex syllable a group of characters are joined together to create a single compound character. The word Kharosthi are looks a Kashmiri word. It is said that such type of writing was first introduced on the Skin of the Ass; Ass in Kashmiri is known by the name of "Khar" so it was named as Kharoshti.

It served as the ancient script of the land. Most of the ancient coins and inscriptions of this land are inscribed in this script. If Kashmir is written in this script we can by this way also help to restore the ancient script of the land.

When Chinese, Japanese Grecian and other advanced countries are still carrying their official businesses in their ancient (Ionographical) scripts, I feel we shall also not hesitate to revive the ancient script of our glorious land and experiment it for our centuries old mother tongue.

KASHMIR

I feel all of us are confused about original geography of our homeland, infact are unable to identify the borders of this country, which is known to world by its original name of; Kashmir. It is the land which is the homeland of a distinctive nation and its natives are called Kashmiris. They have different culture, language and art of living which makes them different from its neighbours. It is their history which we say is 5000 years old and first nation which possesses its ancient written history.

However, when we say state of Jammu and Kashmir, we then represent the whole state and composite culture, the significance of Kashmir decreases. We not only invite a shadow to our own culture but also restrain our long history, thus bring confusion to our national identity. No doubt, in terms of the state, we are expanding our territorial integrity but that does not mean that the entire territory of the state can be identified with Kashmir.

Kashmir and state, are two entirely different terms, Kashmir is the name given to a very beautiful land called, which is as old as this beautiful land is. There are different legends and myths which reveal different stories about the event when this glorious piece of land achieved this title and came to be known as Kashmir.

The local traditions suggest that Kashmir was derived from Khaspa, the local saint who is believed to have helped in draining the waters of this land. Ancient Greek records call it Kaperiria, while Chinese accounts mention it as Kia Shimelo. Tibetans and Dards have named it Kashrt. The people inhabiting this land have named it as Kasheer and its people as Kashir.

The piece of land is not unique but is distinctive in its character. So far as its position and form is concerned there is no parallel to it, in the whole of Himalayas. The land encircled with high mountains from all sides, makes it different from all other lands. Its people have entirely different culture, art and language. They have their own traditions and rituals. Despite of several external cultural invasions which entered the land, Kashmiris original habits and character was never changed.

While commenting on this character various outsiders have given some how a common picture and all of them say that no doubt Kashmiris are full of qualities but at the same time they are false tongued, always ready with a lie and given to various forms of deceit. It is their character (good and bad), physique, language, living habits architecture, dress, culture and other traditions and ritual, which makes them to represent different nationality quite distinct from its neighbours.

The most common factor which determines its nationality is their language, art and food culture. Its history we say is 6000 years old. The first evidences of their inhabitation were revealed from Lidder valley of Pahalgam where we watched them making stone and bone tools. From here Kashmiri reached on the plateaus of Burzham and Gufkal where he made first residential houses by digging out the cave pits and covered them with birch leaves.

This land saw the advent of Maurya's, Greeks, Kushans, Kiddar and Huns. For a quiet long period its people were allowed to rule their land themselves. Those were periods, when local dynasties of Karkotas, Ulpalas, Lahauras and late Lahauras were followed by Muslim Sultans of Shahmeeri and Chak (7th AD to 15th century AD) dynasties. In 1585 AD they were occupied by Delhi ruler Akbar and their land was annexed with Delhi empire. This aggression was followed by Durrani of Kabul, Sikhs of Punjab and Dogras of Jammu.

During these foreign aggressions the land's political geography made an extensive expansion on all of its sides. It several times subjugated its neighbouring hilly states and brought them under the political map of this land.

Some times the authority of its own rulers expanded on its outer states, it mostly happened in the regimes of Maharaja Lalitaditya, Sultan-Shab-ud-Din and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidine. But these all expansions and accessions proved timely and could not change the political geography, of the land known to all as Kashmir till the advent of Dogra Rajas of Jammu who changed it, under the treaty of Amratsar dated 1846 AD.

Dogra Maharajas who ascended the Kashmir throne one by one, badly affected the political geography of this centuries old glorious land of Kashmir. They founded an empire from Lakhanpura to Gilgit and Skardu, which included Ladakh, Padder, Kishtwar, Reasi, Basoli, Ramnagar, Rajouri, Mirpur, Poonch and, other more smaller hilly principalities and named it a state with its new name Jammu and Kashmir state. Jammu which has never remained its part during its independent Hindu or Muslim periods was permanently associated with its name.

Kashmir as described in earlier, refer to a vast mountain surrounded land with distinctive identity in terms of its geography, culture, history and art and language was given a sur name not of a vast land, but of a town called Jammu, which has even no control on its adjoining towns of Bilawar, Basoli, Ramangar Reasi and not to speak of its distant towns of Dodda, Kishtawar, Poonch, Rajouri

and Mirpur. Jammu, Ladakh, Gilgit and Skardu no doubt these might have some trade relations with Kashmir but that does not justify the fact of representing Kashmir nationality. These regions have different geography, culture, art and language and in no way are parallel to Kashmiri culture.

Tibat whose earlier name was Lahsa had once better trade relations with Kashmir and for some times it was also part of this newly created state of Jammu and Kashmir, does it mean that we shall also launch claim for Tibetans lands. No, Tibetan has a different nationality which is purely Tibetan and their identity lies in Tibet. So is our's whether we live in east or west, we are Kashmiri and represent a culture which is called Kashmiri culture and speak Kashmiri as our mother tongue.

All most all records available of past Dogra Maharaja periods have spoken of this land as Kashmir not Jammu and Kashmir infact we are all supposed to think of this land in terms of Kashmir not in terms of the state.

PRESERVE IT IN BOOKS

In most of the countries of South Asia, heritage tourism has become a very important field for the tourist industry. These countries have been exploiting various cultural and environmental assets to boost their, tourism sector. Nepal is perhaps one of them where this type of tourism is very much popular. Rajasthan, W. Bengal are among few Indian states where heritage buildings and ancient monuments have been attracting large crowds. Agra, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bhubneshwar and Varanasi are Indian cities where a number of heritage buildings have been brought under heritage tourism purview.

Kashmir perhaps is the only unfortunate land where, despite of rich cultural and environmental potentials, heritage tourism could never flourish. The tourism industry of this land which is the repository of distinctive culture, monuments archaeological discoveries, festivals, environmental sties, splendid musicians, wonderful dishes and attractive buildings, could not flourish beyond the purview of scenic tourism.

It does not mean that there are no tourists visiting Kashmir interested in other fields. There are many foreign tourists who visit this land every year in search of heritage sites. It has been observed by many that most

of the people who visit this land are not merely interested in its scenic' beauty; there are such foreign and domestic visitors who have got intellectual tastes and are interested in the multifarious cultural fields of the land.

If we are not able to introduce our culture and heritage the tourist industry and not able to provide any basic facilities in this sector it does not mean that there are no tourists. It is our inefficiency that we are not providing the basic infrastructure to our visitors at our heritage sites. Such visitors come to the Valley and they are not even being provided with any first hand information, for instance guidebooks and maps. However, this is not the case with undocumented sites only, even state and centrally protected heritage sites are facing this problem and with the result have become inaccessible to lacs of visitors. There is no proper conservation, preservation and maintenance of these sites. Most of these sites and other heritage material also stand undocumented.

Thanks to CHEK (Centre for Heritage and Environment Kashmir) that it has taken up the documentation job of heritage buildings of Srinagar City.

The jobs that the responsibility of government departments as for instance the state archaeology and tourism department have been taken up by CHEK. It is won-

derful.

This NGO claims to have documented about 852 architectural heritage buildings of the city and produced the work in several volumes. It is a great job. A history making architecture, has been preserved in books. The archaeology and tourism departments have only been talking of heritage preservation and tourism, while on the ground they have completely failed to deliver the goods.

I, on behalf of the people of this land, have a message for these departments: We do not live in a fool's paradise. We also live in the same land where you all live and we also belong to this land. We all are well aware of our heritage and know as well how it is being maintained in this unfortunate land. I am not talking of unidentified and undocumented sites. I mean those sites which decades back have been brought under State's various antiquities, monuments and archaeological remains, act.

The legislation has been passed and there is an Act known as Ancient Monuments Preservation Act sumvet 1970 and another act passed by Central government which is known as Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Remains Act. There are about 100 monuments that have already been declared as protected monuments and brought under State maintenance. The Archaeological Sur-

vey of India is maintaining about 64 sites while State Archaeology Department about 40 sites. Many sites are being maintained by various religious and social agencies. Excluding few centrally protected sites, how have other monuments and religious sites been preserved and brought under heritage tourism sector? Perhaps every body knows it very well. Most of these sites reveal the tales of government and public apathy.

All these sties are in rums and present a deserted look. There are such monuments, which were never repaired since the times of their discovery/identification. The acts passed already for this purpose have lost their meaning.

Besides, for the past several years hardly any visitor has turned to see these sites, which in post 1947 were attracting large crowds.

In the, current year when 8,00,000 tourists have so far visited Kashmir, the number of visitors who have visited the various heritage sites of Srinagar, as per unofficial figures, is very disappointing.

NOT SRINAGAR BUT SHAHAR

Just like we are unaware of actual geography of our homeland Kashmir, so are we unable to call its main city with its proper name. We know it by the name of Srinagar, Srinagari or Shrinagar. Why we call it by this name? Perhaps most of us, like me, know very little about it. However very few can deny this fact that our ancestors called their city as Shahar, while in official records it was mentioned as Kashmir. Shahar was the local name given to this city by its natives and it was most popular name, probably in all most all its periods of history.

The elderly people of Kamraz and Maraz division still call Srinagar by its original name Shahar. Only few years back the conductors at various bust stands of the valley while calling Srinagar bound passengers would cry loudly Shahar, Shahar, Shahar. This Shahar was at the tip of the tongue of every one and much familiar among all natives of the land. There were many local people to whom the name Srinagar looked a strange one. They would never call their city with this strange name. There are still many such people who know this city with its name as Shahar.

Shahar, Srinagar, Srinagari Paravasenpura, Purandistan and Kashmir are the various names which refer to

this most beautiful city of this land. Although the word Shahar served as the most popular name for this city as it was the word which natives always pronounced but the other names also had some historical background.

Purandistana is perhaps the ancient name of this city given to it by Maharaja Ashoka in 3rd century BC. The king, as recorded in history, is believed to have established this city on the banks of river Jehlum and named it Purindistana. The modern locality of Pandrethan is basically the developed form of that old city. Perhaps in the most ancient period the city was called by this name. Today this name has become entirely outdated one and hardly anybody knows that it served once as the old name of the city.

Paravapura or Parvasenpura are the other ancient names used for this city. It is said that one Raja of the land named Parvasena named the city after his name and used it as capital city. It is identified which the location of Mazari Kalan near Syed Bahud-ud-Din Sahib (RA) under the tale of Kohimaraan hill. This name of the city is also mentioned in olden historical records.

Parvasena is recorded to have ascended Kashmir throne in about 6th century AD and given his name to this city! For certain period, city came to be known by

this name but it was only during his period and mostly in literatures, while for a common man it was Shahar. During Sultan-Zain-ul-Abidini's period it was again renamed as Nov Shahar (new city). Shahar was there, he only added Nov (new) to it. Nov Shahar may also have continued for some period.

Mughal ruler Akhar founded his own city inside the Kohimaraan rampart which he named as Nagar Nagar. When Sikhs came to rule this city they added Sri to Nagar and the city adopted the name Srinagar.

Apart from Shahar the name Srinagar also turned popular. It received the full official support. The Sikhs and Dogra Rajas made it as the official name of the city which still continues. This status was recognized everywhere, at official as well as at public level.

The European missionaries were also introduced with this new name of the city. Gradually the new generations became more familiar with this name of the city. It came to be written in books and official files. A time reached when Srinagar, became the official as well as the common name of the city. People also learned to call their Shahar with this newly adopted name. The word Shahar gradually lost its significance, although it was the basic and pet name of the city but as it could not receive any of-

ficial patronage in any regime, with the result it vanished in thin air.

The Sikhs and Dogra Rajas provided official patronage to word Srinagar, which helped them to replace Shahar with Srinagar.

Prior to these periods as already discussed Shahar was the original name of the city but it was only its non official name given to it by its natives. They could not succeed to get it officially recognized. Officially it was known as Kashmir. Kashmir as the valley of Kashmir while its main city was known to its rulers as Kashmir. For hundreds of years the city was called by the same name as the country that is Kashmir. Accordingly it is found that Bernier in Aurangzeb's period and Foster who traveled in the country in 1783 have used the name Kashmir and not Srinagar. Kashmir was the original official name adopted for this city. The records, available of local Sultans, Rajas, Governors, Mughals and Durrans speak of today's Srinagar as Kashmir. Almost all Kashmiri kings who have struck their currency in this land displayed the name of their respective mints as Zarb-e-Kashmir.

Their all mint houses existed only in this city which they oftenly named Kashmir but for its people it was merely Shahar. Where from Srinagar came one is am unable

to understand it. Perhaps we are confused with Srinagar-Garhwal and some body has copied it from Uttar Pardesh and used it for our Shahar. Let us give them their name back and call our beloved city again as Shahar.

THE LAND OF VOLCANOES

The recent earthquake has once again made it clear that we live in an earthquake prone zone and given our lack of knowledge about earthquakes nothing can perhaps save us from the impending disasters.

Geologists and historians have already described Kashmir as a dangerous zone as far as occurrence of earthquakes is concerned. According to them the frequency of earthquakes recorded here is of a very high scale.

If we go into the origin of Kashmir we would come to the conclusion that it was actually a lake filled with high level of water: Many historians call this lake as Satisar. It is also said that the level of water present in the Valley was so much that there was no way from where it could have been drained. In history books we find several references as to how the water of satisar was finally drained. One of the most common views recorded in Kashmir history says that it was a major earthquake that paved the way for the water to drain out of the valley of Kashmir. Many travelers believed that a violent earthquake had hit a mountain somewhere at Baramulla and created an outlet for the lake waters to drain through via the Baramulla gorge.

It is also said that it was a subterranean force that turned extremely violent at Baramulla. As a result of this vi-

olent force a major earthquake hit the place and ultimately paved way for the lake waters to leave the valley for good. From it one can easily surmise the geography of the land that itself came into being due to an earthquake. This also shows its sensitivity. In other words, it can be safely said that the eruption of a volcano gave birth to Kashmir; something that in a way clearly spells out that the base of our Valley is actually volcanic in nature.

However there is no such record available with us that can even remotely point to as to how many earthquakes have taken place here since the Valley of Kashmir actually came into being due to a volcanic eruption. However, from the 15th century AD onwards we have records to show as to how many major earthquakes occurred here and what impact they had on life and property of the Kashmiri people. The evidences of catastrophes created by few major earthquakes are found at various places in Kashmir.

The remnants of Lalitaditya's Rajvihar and Avanti Varman's temple ruins at Parahaspura and Avantipura are living evidences of the disastrous impact of past natural calamities in the Valley. Various Kashmiri records contain a mention of eleven such great earthquakes that caused destruction all around. All of them were of a longer duration and subsequently resulted in a heavy loss to life and

property. Recorded evidence shows that during the 19th century AD, four major earthquakes rocked the Kashmir valley with elliptical area focused on Baramulla and Srinagar. Walter A Lawrence in his famous book, "The Valley of Kashmir" gives the following painful picture of the earthquake which occurred in Kashmir in 1885 AD.

The earthquake of 1895 commenced on May 30 and shocks more or less violent were felt up to August 16. Houses were destroyed, and there was a general panic among the people who have had to sleep out of doors for many days. It is said that some 3500 persons were killed and the number of cattle, ponies and other domestic animals crushed by falling buildings was enormous. Baramulla and Pattan seem to have suffered the most and large earth fissures were caused, from which it is reported that sulphur fumes and inflammable gasses were emitted. Many old water springs disappeared and landslips occurred; one of which at Lari Dura in the Krihuma tehsil.

Besides historians and archaeologists, there is another group of researchers called geologists who study the rocks. They have given a very detailed description of Kashmir's landscape. Dr. Hugh Falconer, a noted geologist of his times writes, "In Paleozoic and again in Eocene times ... there is an abundant evidence that igneous or volcanic agencies were actively at work in the Kashmir Hi-

malaya, as is proved by the out pouring of vast qualities of volcanic rocks."

In the Valley there are sulphurous springs, one such spring gushes up M Malakhnag area of Anantnag city. It is locally known as Gamdakhnaq. In Kashmir sulphur is generally known as Gamdakh. The other springs, which are abundantly found in South Kashmir, possess distinctive features. These springs are hot in winter and very cold in summers. There are also few springs which are called hot springs as they remain hot in all the seasons. Geologists attribute this to subterraneous volcanic action.

If the views of geologists, archaeologists and historians are to be believed we can say that Kashmir is likely to witness many earthquakes of higher magnitude in the times to come. The Saturday's devastating earthquake was one such quake that killed thousands of people in two Kashmir's. Given the widespread death and destruction it caused we will have to find ways of ensuring self-protection. Here a big question arises: are our houses strong, enough withstand the earthquake tremors and shocks?

Generations ago, people were wise enough to make their; houses quake proof by way of extensive use of timber in construction of their respective houses. The rustic people of yesteryears were more forward than us

in that they; had made temporary arrangements in their respective courtyards for taking Shelter as and when need arose. Conversely, today's houses are completely concrete in nature. The material is of such nature that even mild tremors can send the buildings tumbling down. The recent earthquake has in a way made relevant the earlier house models.

LESSONS FROM LALLA ARIFA

Most of the people know much about Lalla Arifa but I knew very little. That too I learned from my elders. She is said had been a saintly woman of the 15th Century AD. Her teachings and simple life profoundly influenced the thought and life not only of her contemporary socially but also influenced the woman of the later ages. The imprints of Lalla's patience and morality were also carried by the woman of the recent past.

As every one knows that about 500 years ago, a saintly woman appeared on the social fabric of Kashmir. She preached the doctrine of non-violence, patience, love, sympathy and above all she had message for simple living and morality. By her deeds, she attained the heights of spirituality and became Lalleswari for Hindus and Lalla Arifa for Muslims she contributed a lot in re-shaping the social fabric, of the land and showed the path of morality and patience to the woman. The woman who made Arifa as her ideal carried all those values which the women of a civilized society required. She came to be regarded as a true mother and maker of the sacred society of the land.

Since for lost few years it is being observed that most of the Kashmiri women has not only lost those traditional values but patience and morality as well. Today's

woman has gone beyond the limits of her domestic culture and in her race of leading the society this silent maker of the society has helped a lot in pushing the society in a polluted setup. If once she stood a symbol of love, modesty, patience and sympathy, but today she has lost most of such qualities.

Kashmiri woman once is said was so elegant that she does not even knew what was hate she knew the language of love and sympathy. As a daughter she could understand her place in her family and never, claimed for an equal status that of his brother. She could remain happy within the four walls of his home and took pride in serving others, while in her parents home she had to suffice with what little was being offered to him.

As a domestic woman she not only prepared the food but also took pride in serving it among the family members. She would never touch her plate until others finished their ones and sometimes she could get sufficient food and had to pass hungry days.

It was because she had got inspirations from Lalla Arifa who is said to have sufficed with a Neelvath (Stone) for her dinner, the Kashmiri proved associated with Lalla states, Hund Marteen, Hakur Marteen Lalla Neelwhut Chali Ne Zah. It is said that Lalla was married in her early age.

Her in-laws were cruel to her. She was never given sufficient food to feed her-self. Her mother in law used to put a humpy stone on her platter and covered it thinly with rice to make it look quite a big heap to others. Lalla has to bear it silently for about 12 years and never claimed before anybody, not even to her husband. The truth came out only after once her father in law accidentally saw it. This type of silence, patience and modesty served basis for other woman. One can not expect every woman to have Lalla's like patience but what a simple and sympathetic life this saintly woman lived could have been made a model by the woman of this age too. The contemporary woman neglected her teachings. The rich olden traditions have been ignored altogether which affected badly the Kashmirian social fabric of the society.

It has contributed towards the social unrest. All most every house in the present set-up has turned to a battlefield.

If the, teachings of the noted women like Lalla Arifa are properly adopted there is no question that the society can not restore its past glory.

BULBUL LANKER

The site of Bulbul Lanker be declared as protected heritage site as it carries the grave of the first Muslim sultan of the land, it infact has a great historical and archeological value. The site is over crowded with thick and heavy constructions, the unchecked human vandalism and encroachments have not only over showed the grave of the Sultan but also the historical Khanqah of Bulbul Shah. The site is located at Bulbul Lanker in old Srinagar city. It is here that the first mosque of the land was raised by Syed Sharief-ud-Din allias Bulbul Shah in early 14th century AD. The entire site in itself is a written history which reminds us of those days when for the first time Azaan (Calling Muslims for prayers) was heard from the meenars of the mosque.

The site has been said to be the place where first Jamia Mosque of Kashmir was built, which not only facilitated first regular prayer meetings but also the Friday prayers were offered in this mosque.

The site which served as the first Khanqah had a Langer (free kitchen) attached to it and also served the base institute of Islamic learning and teaching. The institution cultivated Islamic Sufism under the able guidance of Syed Sharief-ud-Din Bulbul Shah.

Syed had set up a Muslim institution where local students were imparted Islamic education, a Langer (free kitchen) had also been established. For meeting up the daily expenses of the kitchen, the sultan had put some villages of Pargana Nargam at the disposal of the institution.

The site which still carries its old name is famous as "Bulbul Lanker". Lanker is the corrupt form of langer so Bulbul Lanker means the free kitchen of Bulbul Shah. The historical importance of Bulbul Lanker is also evident by the fact that the site provided bases for establishment of Muslims Sultanate as recorded; Rigyal Bu Richen a Tibetan Buddhist prince embraced Islam at the hands of Bulbul Shah in 1320 AD. He became the first Muslim ruler of the land. He was followed by his Buddhist subjects, when Buddhists of the land learned that their king has accepted new religious faith, they also followed him and embraced Islam.

The Sultan in Muslim order adopted new name of Sadar-ud-Din and came to be known as Sultan Sudar-ud-Din. As a token of love and gratitude, the Sultan built the Khanqah in the name of his peer (Guide) which later on came to be known as Khanqah-e-Bulbul. Both peer and his mureed (disciple) were later laid rest at Bulbul Lanker. Their graves are also well identified. However, lack of

proper conservation, timely repairs and poor maintenance, could not preserve the

Khanqah to reach to in its original form, the Khanqah which today exists here looks a new one, although no anitquity of the glorious past is reported from the site, still the grave of Sultan Sadar-ud-Din is found here. The existing Khanqah has a long history of its own. It served as Jamia Masjid up to 1904.

It reveals a long tale of atrocities committed at the hands of man and nature. The basic structure of the Khanqas is stated was three story building. It was a wooden structure. In year 1604 it got destroyed by fire, and was then reconstructed by the disciples of the saint. Mirza Haider Kashgari records that the classical style of Khanqah exiled up to 1620 AD. Bates, the European traveler who visited the Khanqah in 1872 AD, saw the structure in poor condition. The existing Khanqah has a single story with five small meenars at its corners. The grave of the Sultan in the courtyard of the Khanqah bears an informative grave stone. The entire site needs to be brought under heritage net and developed as heritage tourism site.

YOUNG CASTLE

The state's earliest internal Octroi Post "Guzarvan" also known by some as "Castle" at Abi Guzar Srinagar is yet to find any place in the protected list of monuments of the state.

The monument which is situated on the right bank of river Jehlum still preserves very much of its pristine glory. The building like Sheergarhi Complex has been raised with its side plinth from the river waters. Its stone steps lead up from the water to the inside of the building.

Besides, the main structure, its massive lime plaster walls and 'Mehrab' (arch) type windows and arches are to a large extent intact while the lattice work wooden frames 'Roshan Dans' and windows stands removed.

The complex is very old, the records of its foundation are not known. However, the people living adjacent to it say that the building served as an Octroi Post during Dogra Maharajas.

"The site is known as 'Guzarwan' and we have heard from our elders that it served as an Octroi Post in Maharaja's period," says one Ghulam Hassan Sheikh, who runs a retail consumer shop in a corner side of the building.

Abi Guzar the locality actually is believed to have

borrowed its name from this complex, said Abdul Rehman, a boatman.

He said that it was from this point that the municipal area of the Srinagar city once started and boats served as the main means of transportation which connected Srinagar with other smaller towns of the Valley.

While giving further details of this olden complex, Rehman said that it was the Maharaja who had set up this post at the bund to collect Octroi fees from the boats arriving from South Kashmir.

The building is said served the purpose until the water transportation was replaced by surface transport.

This monument attracted large number of foreign travelers, who used to sail in the river on well decorated Shikaras, says a tourist guide. These foreign tourists have also mentioned it in their respective travelogues.

Although there is a common belief that the building served as an Octroi Post for decades together, but there are few travelers who say that was the purpose for which it was originally built is not known.

There is a mention of this monument even in the European travelers' records, which say they called it "Young Castle".

Some say that the building perhaps served as an old school complex.

Whether it served as an Octroi Post or a school building is not important; what is, however, important is that this ancient building is crying for some attention and it should get what is its due. To begin with, it needs some immediate repairs so that this building, which serves an important connection with our past, is preserved for posterity.

AA'LI MASJID

While it is almost “established” that the magnificence of the heritage sites of the Valley has hit the din owing to the apathy of the concerned authorities as well as public, there are Muslim mosques built hundreds of years ago which are also withering and bordering on complete annihilation. An ancient mosque located at Eidgah Srinagar is, truly, in ruins. This monument, besides being a mosque, is a precious heritage building. Abdul Rashid, resident of Edigah says, “more painful is the fact that the people of the faith are indifferent towards this unfortunate structure”.

Popularly known as “Aa’li Masjid”, it has a history dating back hundreds of years and its impressive architectural contours have attracted people from far-off lands. History records that the mosque was originally built by Ali Shah, the son of a famous Sultan, Sultan Sikander in 1415 AD. The mosque initially was named as Aali Masjid and the name later came to be pronounced is Aa’li Masjid, in Kashmiri dialect.

The Masjid measures 18 ft (L) by 75 ft. (B). It is one of the most impressive buildings of the Sultanate period, says, a historian, adding “and still carries its impressive architectural details”. Besides its massive walls, the most

interesting are its lofty wooden columns internally supporting the wooden ceilings of the mosque. Its wonderful "mi-harb" on the western wall bears a magnificent inscription in Arabic, the "Kalima toyibah". Moulvi Muhammad Yusuf Shah, the celebrated "Wazkhan" is learnt to have delivered sermons from the minarets of this mosque.

This monument has turned into ruins; its walls stand dilapidated, the mosque courtyard is hidden under heaps of dirt while rodents have dug big holes into its massive walls. The plaster affixed to the external and internal walls is falling off.

I am 40 and have been living adjacent to this Masjid but do not remember if any face-lifting measure was undertaken on the mosque", says Bashir Ahmad. The dilapidated condition of the mosque stands witness to Bashir's statements.

The archeology authorities when contacted said that the mosque is under the charge of Waqf Board. Waqf Board authorities when contacted said that they have moved a proposal to this affect and various renovation designs are being devised from local as well as Delhi based architects.

"Mufti Sahib is very serious about historical shrines", says Ghulma Hassan Bhat, general manger construc-

tions division of the Waqf Board. Agreeing that the historic mosque has been neglected, he says, "we have framed a plan to restore the pristine glory of this historic mosque for which various architects have been asked to provide their respective designs. Our priorities include the restoration of the mosque's classical architectural orders." When asked as to when the restoration work of the mosque is expected to be undertaken on the site, Bhat said, that is not decided as yet.

All one can do is hope that the restoration work on the site is undertaken at an earliest. Otherwise one more monument and religious shrine will vanish from this glorious land.

KOTABAL AN URBAN CIVILIZATION

The recent discovery of major urban civilization settlement remnants of ancient Kashmir on the plateau of Kotabal, Anantnag in South Kashmir has once again challenged the views of those historians who have been advocating ancient civilization of

Kashmir was “purely a rural one” and that people possessed “little knowledge of cave digging”.

According to these historians, the ancient Kashmiris were cave dwellers and lived a nomadic form of living with hunting and agriculture as their main occupation.

However, the Kotabal discovery, which is under its initial phase of excavation, has been giving a different story of Kashmirian ancient man which is purely an urban one that too highly advanced.

The pavement of large stamped bricks brought to light on this small hill not only speaks of advancement of brick-making and stamping art but the motifs of standing human beings, men and women and elephant riders point towards some highly advanced civilization which looks more close to some western civilization.

May it be close to ancient Egypt, Roman or to Hellenistic culture, cannot be said with any authority at a stage-

when operation of this settlement is still in its initial phase. The site has been revealing such highly advanced materials which have baffled the excavators.

Muhammad Shafi Zahid, Deputy Director Archaeology is engaged in excavation of the site with his other assistants. He says he had been keeping record of every find of the site. "There is a passion and mere curiosity in its excavation, said Muhammad Shafi Zahid, adding that the motifs stamped on these tiles and their placement is wonderful which definitely speaks of some highly advanced tribe which has flourished on this Kotabal Hill."

This is unique discovery of its kind in Kashmir but at the same time has certain links with Harwan settlement. "The settlement has either flourished in the period when Harwan settlement flourished or sometime before or after it"

If this observation is taken into account, then one can say that Kotabal civilization has been contemporary to Harwan which is dated to 3rd century AD.

Harwan was excavated in year 1923 by Ram Chandra Kak. Although he associated the settlement with Buddhist culture but it was first evidence of any ancient urban civilization discovered in this land.

The Kotabal settlement is another one which has substantiated the Harwan evidences. These are the sites which revealed that their respective settlers had been well-educated and carrying their writings in ancient Kharoshti scripts. These scripts are also displayed in the finds of Harwan and Kotbal.

The historians who have been ignoring the urban phase of ancient Kashmir, the Harwan and now Kotabal are hoped shall open up their eyes so that they can reconstruct their earlier hypotheses in light of actual archeological evidence.

MUGHAL STRUCTURE

There should be no complaints regarding undiscovered archaeological remains and unidentified monuments not being declared as protected monuments when properly identified ones stand undeclared. Since the last few decades hardly any archaeological, architectural or historical site has been declared as protected in the State, and such sites are crumbling under the weight of time and human duress.

One such outstanding example is that of a Mughal period shrine situated at Safa Kadal Srinagar, once the trading mart of the city. The shrine is built of fine Budshahi bricks (small bricks) and has been identified as the shrine of Sheikh Ibrahim, a Mughal period saint of this land.

The shrine serves as the mausoleum of the saint and his disciples located at Shah Mohalla. The shrine is learnt to have been built by Aurangzeb in 17th Century AD.

This rich site is facing institutional apathy of the authorities, who just do not pay any heed to its relevance and importance.

The Emperor is stated to have also raised a stone tomb on the grave of Akhum Mulla, which are only few

yards away from this shrine. The shrine internally houses the mortal remains of the saint and his other disciples who are laid here in two rows. The most outstanding feature of the site is the grave stones which speak of great craftsmanship.

“These gravestones are similar to those Mughal gravestones, which are found in Mughal shrines at Delhi and Agra,” says archaeologist, adding that there is no doubt that the shrine is small but it has great architectural and historical significance. Its brickwork, plinths, doors and internal arrangement are of high archaeological value.

PARIHASPURA

Tourism is the buzz word in Kashmir of present. Schemes, incentives, wavering of loans, avenues and opportunities have marked the recent past. In the same folds, though devoid of any such schemes falls heritage tourism, that stands ignored as an economy boosting sector and in itself, the heritage sites and monuments lie in ruins. No attempts are made to salvage these world class treasures. One such treasure, facing apathy of the authorities, is the world class archaeological site of Lalitaditya's glorious city at Devar Parihaspura. The ruins of this once wondrous city of King Lalita-yaditya do not figure on the list of tourist sites of the land. The site has disappeared from the tourist map of Kashmir and has delved into oblivion for its own people. This site, that once attracted crowds of tourists, wears a deserted look these days, while no basic tourist infrastructure is available at the site. No one visits this site.

This archaeological site of high importance matters to the rest of the world, as mentions of it are found in world literature and discourses, but the authorities here just do not care. Like that. And if they do not care about the heritage, one is forced to ask, what about the economy of Kashmir.

Decades back, proposals were made to declare the

site as a major heritage site of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1986, a project report was prepared, the draft of which is learnt was also approved by a cabinet sub committee. However, it was never implemented. Besides steps were also initiated in the past to introduce the site to the Buddhist world by holding an international Buddhist conference at the site, but to no avail again.

Located at a distance of only 23 kms from Srinagar on the Srinagar-Baramullah stretch, Parihaspura archaeological site is the most famous Buddhist sites of Kashmir valley. It is locally known as "Kanishah" (stone city)

MAMALESHWARA TEMPLE

An archeological wonder of the Lidder valley has been turned into a laughing stock of sorts. All this to the credit of the 'sparkling' construction carried out by the Pahalgam Development Authority in collaboration with State Archives Department.

The Pahalgam Development Authority few years back undertook the renovation work of Mamaleshwara temple at Pahalgam. The project is learnt to have been funded by the State Archives Department. The historical monument was supposed to get renovated with no alteration of the original details and materials which required expertise. However, the concerned agency embarked on renovating the temple without caring for the details and used average materials for the same. The temple, which originally had no ceiling, was provided a concrete cemented ceiling (a slab). And now the renovated (read ruined) structure's is something else, with no feature preserved or even replicated.

The temple originally had no ceiling as records R C Kak in 'Ancient Monuments of Kashmir'. Providing architectural details of this superb structure Kak writes, "The temple is 8 inch square internally and has in front a porch supported on two fluted columns, one of which is missing.

No remnants of the ceiling are left. The walls are straight and vertical above the string course. The temple originally had no ceiling”.

The concerned agencies have not only faltered at preserving the exquisite features of the temple but have ruined the structure as irrelevant (wrong) material has been used in the renovation. The temple built of magnificently chiseled massive lime stones, has been repaired using un-matching colour of dever stones, the ceiling is cement and iron, like the local slab four residential houses, while the front columns have been raised using inappropriate material(s). This ‘renovation’ has blemished the architectural wonder and put the ‘archaeological sense’ of the concerned professionals under question. And the monument of great wonder located in a public place at Mamal Pahalgam has turned very amusing for the visitors because of its funny architectural features; courtesy the PDA.

The temple is recorded to have been built by queen Suryamti in 11th century AD. The monument stands enlisted under the state monuments list. It is also a pilgrimage site for Yatries visiting Amarnath.

USHKAR

Ushkar, the most important historical town of Kashmir located on, once the historical trade route which connected Kashmir with North-Western India has nowadays reached merely to a simple locality of Baramulla town. No antiquity of its olden settlements is left here except the ruins of a medieval period Buddhist monastery Ushkar once attracted crowds of tourists and researchers when archaeologists in 1930 revealed existing archaeological heritage materials. A big board of archaeological treasure was revealed, near its ruins of the monastery. It included well molded and well earned terracotta head, pieces of bodies covered with drapery, broken figures of princesses, their attendants Buddhistmen, Buddhist mendicants in their draped robes, crowns, ornaments, necklaces. These are materials were housed in the State Museum at Srinagar.

Ushkar, is the corrupt form of its olden name Huvishkapura which Kushan King named Huvishka. In this town Kushan's had built several viharas and monasteries, and it served as a major institution for Buddhist teachings. The first Chinese Ambassador Heuin Tsang who visited Kashmir in 631 AD was received with high honor by Durlabhvardhana Kashmiri King at Ushkar town, Heuin Tsang is said stayed first night in one of monasteries of Ushkar. The learned Ambassador is said stored his research from

Ushkar monasteries where preens records were kept Maharaja Lalitaditya, is said raised another monastery at Ushkar which enhanced its historical outlook.

Of its fine location and rich archaeological value Ushkar has a great potential for heritage tourism, but is was never explode for this real purpose, No basic infrastructure is provided at the site, trying of things is that the site is even not unleveled was founded here by a famous in the tourist map of the land

KASHMIRI SULTANS

Much has been written and said about the Muslim Sultans of Kashmir deliberating on the known events and facts about them repeatedly. The respective historians and writers have constructed the history of this period mainly on the information provided by literary sources, what Jona-raja and Srivara have said that has been incorporated in respective hypothesis. There is no doubt that Sultanate period history is mostly known by written records, while as the archaeology coins and inscriptions have a very little role to play. The archaeological evidences belonging to this period are very little. No secular monument or any habitation material is available of this period. We have hardly few religious shrines available of that period that too have not reached to us in original form. What archaeological material available of Sultanate period consists of coins and inscriptions, the new study of this material has revealed few unknown events of Sultanate period. It is through these coins and inscriptions we come to know about various titles adopted by respective sultans of this land. Salateens ruled this land for 247 years, from 1339 AD to 1586 AD. It consisted of two houses, Shahmeri and Chak. Sultan Skindar, Sultan Badshah, Sultan Shahabudin and Sultan Yousuf Shah were the most famous Sultans of this land. These Sultans have adopted very interesting titles and subtitles.

The archeological evidences found of these Sultans suggest that "Al Sultan-Al-Azam" which means supreme sovereign has been the popular title adopted by almost every Sultan of this land. Besides the common titles, there are few subtitles and special titles discovered on the coins of these Sultans.

Sultan Zainul Aabideen the most famous king and his son Haider Shah were titled as, "Naib Amir" and "Naib-Khalifa" respectively. These titles suggest that the authority of these two Sultans was also recognized by the Khalifa of their times.

The Chak Sultans besides these titles had adopted "Gazi's" which means 'brave' and 'courageous' man. This 'Gazi' is attached with every Chak name as inscribed on the coins found in this land. "Nasser-ud-Din" is another title found on few coins of Sultan Hussian Shah. Another title that of "Salar-e-Azam" Commander in Chief, is found on few coins of Sultan Yousuf Shah Chak. The title of Salar-e-Azam suggests that the sultan had declared himself as the Chief Commander of his forces, which fought against the Mughal invaders.

The historians did not know the title earlier and it came to light only when a hoard of copper coins was discovered few years back at Barthana Srinagar. This hoard

carried coins of almost every Kashmiri Sultan with their wonderful titles. Most of these titles were unknown to Kashmiri History. The study of this hoard by the contributor had brought to light many significant historical records. It carried the coins of nine Shahmeeri and two Chak Sultans which were placed in this hoard in a chronological order. It revealed several wonderful types of Sultanate coinage.

Few rare and unknown types of the coins were also found from the hoard. For example, Yousuf Shah Chak's, Al Sultan, Al Azam titles were already known but the Salar-e-Azam title came to light for the first time through this hoard. This title was placed on the obverse face of his coins.

The title reveals that Yousuf Shah had himself fought the Mughal invaders who attacked this land in December 1585 AD. Mughals were defeated in this invasion, and it is very likely that Yousuf Shah has been commanding his forces.

KASHMIR ROUTES

It is only a matter of few days that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus will ply n the historical route and connect the divided families. People are very enthusiastic and curious to see this first bus-service ply, or maybe take a ride themselves on it. For many it will be an extraordinary event - they could never have thought of such developments taking place, in their times, so abruptly. The new bus, its conductor, driver and the first passengers or who-soever travels on this bus to the other part of Kashmir will carve new history. A road connecting civilizations has remained closed continuously for a long period and when it is opened once again it would be quite an event for the majority of the people.

Besides this forgotten link, Jammu, Sailkote, Kargil, Askardu and Poonch-Rawalakote routes being reopened, was a distant dream till recently, but now when Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service has been shown the green signal, restoration/reopening of other routes in the near future would be expected. On the internal front, the Anantnag-Kistwar road has been made operational and a bus service runs from Anantnag via Semithan pass to Kishtwar. Reconstruction work on another historical route known as the Salt route as well as Mughal route is on the cards. The beautification and widening of district and village roads-

has already been taken up.

It seems that the present government has attached much significance to surface communication. And thus was born "road politics", we might say. Now demands are growing for decommissioning all other routes which since 1948 stood closed. Politicians are making political gains out of this "road politics" while media and historians also appear very eager to know more and more about the lost historical routes of this land.

Notwithstanding this truth that this government like its predecessor has neglected Kashmiri heritage altogether but by opening of few historical routes it has paved way for historians, and archaeologists, as also tourists, to rediscover the past splendor of these routes.

Kalhan has spoken of Kashmir as unconquerable by the force of soldiers and of the protection offered by its mountain walls. But nature has left gaps, a few mountain passes for communications, which connected this glorious land with the rest of the world. Greeks, Kushans and Jews are learnt to have been the first people to have discovered these passes and entered this glorious Valley. However, the first mention of Kashmir mountain passes is found in Chinese records. Chinese Ambassador Huen Tsang who arrived in Kashmir in 630 AD is the first man to take spe-

cial notice of these mountain passes. Alberuni and Sharaf-ud-Din have given a detailed account of various mountain passes. The Tossamadan pass, Hyhama pass, Daderkote pass, Pir Panchal pass and Jehlum Valley pass are well mentioned in the historical records of the land. The Jehlum Valley pass is known as the earliest route Reading into and out of this land. It connected the Valley with Hazara (ancient Urusha), Hindus and Kabul valley. The ancient civilization of Hellenistic Order which consisted of Indo-Greeks, Scythians, Parthians Kushana and Kidera's are believed to have entered the Valley through this route.

Gandhara art, which in ancient periods influenced local artists is learnt to have traveled to this land via this route. The Gandhara influenced most of the monuments, sculptures etc., and various treasure troves were discovered on this route. These discoveries, interestingly, were made by European archeologists who also traveled through this route. Sir John Marshall, Cunningham, Major Henry, Bishop Cotton, Garriek, Buhler Stein, Nichollas, White Head, Rodgers were famous experts who had carried out extensive research leading to many discoveries in the sector of Kashmiri cultural heritage.

The glorious monumental ruins of Parahaspura Dever, Pattan, Tapar Buniyar and Rampur are standing evidences of the ancient civilization that flourished on the

banks of this route. This monumental glory if explored for tourist industry shall recover the past splendor and zenith of this most ancient historical route. This is the route which has connected civilizations and now it is time for it to connect people of the same land.

HERITAGE WEALTH

Kashmir is the only place where heritage wealth is in worst state. This is not the question of lesser known heritages in shape of manuscripts, coins, documents, historical records and literatures but the glorious monuments, forts, heritage buildings, museums and other research institutions have been neglected. The archaeological sites have fallen prey to human vandalism while monuments are in ruins. Museum collection has been left uncatalogued and unconserved.

The institutions concerned with varied heritages are not to be blamed when government has no concrete heritage policy. Not to put the blame on current government only, the authorities have failed to frame it since 1947. During pre- 1947, such institutions had been put under the direct control of the Royal Darbars, which had a council of experts, mostly from Europe. European heritage missionaries and expert services were being loaned in promoting archaeology, architectural and numismatic researchers. Till 1925 the state had no archaeologist of its own. The Darbar then recommended R C Kak to Europe for attaining technical know how of the field. It was by the aspirations of European experts like Bishop Cotton, Garrik, Buhler, Stein, Rogers, White Head, John Marshall and others that number of heritage sites and thousands of ancient coins

were explored.

Martand, Awantipora, Paandhrethan, Buniyar, Parihaspura, Ushkar, Payar Narasthan, Wanght , Pattan, Harwan like hundreds of sites came into light. While on the other hand Ranbir Research Library, repositories and state museum were established. The efforts of General Godfrey, G B Bleazby, John Marshall and Amar Singh resulted in the establishment of the state museum at Lal Mandi in the Ranbir place in 1898 AD. Since the Darbar lost its constitutional validity and British Residents and experts left this land, the cultural heritage institutions begin to collapse, the excavated archaeological monuments and sites turned into neglect while heritage materials in research institutions and museums remained unconserved and uncatalogued. One feels shy while learning that S P Museum at Lal Mandi is still uncatalogued. Other museums of the world are adopting new information technology, and we are yet to have a simple museum catalogue. It is that museum which once was under the control of Royal Darbar. All other monuments of the state excavated and conserved by European experts do reveal the similar tale of government apathy. Our Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues had no time to spare few moments for heritage institutions.

In other states of the India private and little semi

government agencies have emerged as the big financiers to invest in country's heritage. It is learnt that the countries biggest heritage enterprise TATA group of industries has taken conservation work of several international monuments which includes the world famous Taj at Agra. Besides it, the government has leased Dutch fort at Tranquebar to this group. The more important monuments as Khajuraho temple and Hempi, which already are in the protected monument list of UNESCO, have been handed over to private enterprise. The government of several other states has such plans to open up important heritage sites to private sector.

The government of Madhya Pradesh is learnt offering 14 protected monuments to private enterprise. The sites include Lal Bagh Palace and Raj Wada in Indore and Dhar Fort Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh is also to open up such monuments to private enterprises.

It is very surprising that conservation methods are being adopted at those places where these are not so neglected as in our state.

The private entrepreneurship in our Kashmir has not reached to such extent that those can be easily motivated to contribute something for heritage wealth. However, few semi government financial institutions could have been in-

volved in the process. Mention may be made of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, which in its development has reached to an unexpected height. This bank can effort easily to invest in conservation and documentation of our heritage wealth. It has got a very better future to adopt any heritage site of this land, and took up its conservation work. No doubt, the bank is already helping the government in beautification of several parks and gardens but to invest something in the field of cultural heritage has some different passion and future.

The leading monuments Hariparbat Fort, Mughal Gates, Sun Temple at Martand, Budshah Domath, Ruins at Parihaspura, Ranbir Palace at Lal Mandi are such few sites where the bank has better opportunities to invest. It can also assist the state Museum in preparation of its catalogue (as this is an only world museum, which has no proper record of its collection).

HERITAGE TOURISM

In most of the countries of South Asia heritage tourism has been flourishing rapidly. The governments of these countries have been exploiting their varied cultural properties to give a boost to their respective tourist industries. Nepal is one such State where cultural tourism is very popular. The state has preserved Very rich cultural material. In India, Rajasthan, that otherwise doesn't possess high tourist attraction potential, has explored its archaeological and architectural monuments to lure tourists. It has developed adequate infrastructure on these sites and offers facilities to the tourists like hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, 'parking spaces, emporiums of indigenous handicraft besides archeological guide books and other relevant literatures about these sites are also made available to the visitors.

The West Bengal government has set up heritage commission to explore more heritage sites and monuments and to bring these in purview of heritage tourism. The commission has been functioning very well.

In other states of India the cultural wealth stands maintained very t well and the" maintenance of this wealth has been contributing a big share in promoting the tourist industries of these states. Even the states who have not

much cultural wealth have managed to exploit whatever is available with them to give a boost to their tourism.

Kashmir is perhaps the only place where despite abundance of cultural wealth, not a single cultural site has been opened for tourism. The land of different cultures, monuments, pyramid 'roofed shrines, temples, historical museums, archaeological sites, festivals, wazwaan and magnificent handicraft have tremendous potential to boost tourism industry.

Most of the people who visit this place are not interested merely in the scenic and climatic beauty of the place. There are tourists who have different tastes and would love to know and appreciate the cultural beauty of this place. They would love to see the handicraft, some would like to know the history, while others would be eager to know about mass ruins of archeological monuments and the pyramid roofed shrines too could be great attraction to some of the tourists. Tourists have been found eager to listen to the Kashmiri music and know about musical instruments of the land. Tourists have also been seen hunting for cultural literature like archeological guide books and informative booklets of various cultural events.

The land is fully decorated with these glorious cultural properties but no basic infrastructure for visitors is pro-

vided anywhere at any cultural site. Not to speak of hotels and restaurants, the sites are not even listed in the tourist map of the state. No literature in shape of small guide books about the cultural sites is available anywhere.

It seems that the policy makers of our state are ignorant about their rich cultural wealth. They are unable to frame any such policy whereunder the cultural properties of the land could be exploited to give a boost to the tourism industry. It has been observed that cultural beauties are much bigger attractions for outside tourists than the scenic and climatic beauties. During Maharaja's rule European missionaries and other visitors would be provided ample facilities to visit the monuments of Kashmir but as soon as the government shifted to the local hands, the charm and beauty of archeological ruins was allowed to face decay far away from tourist gaze. Heritage sites became inaccessible even to the locals.

As if this is not enough, these cultural sites have been ignored shamelessly. These are not maintained properly. To cite a few examples, the archaeological monuments of Kohimaraan at Srinagar are in a poor dilapidated condition. Mughal rampart and gates and other wonderful architecture were sufficient to declare the site as heritage hill. Budshah's Dumath and mosque of Madeen Sahib at Maharaj Gunj and Hawal could also be developed as heri-

tage sites with basic infrastructure for tourists. The wooden shrines of Kashmiri Sufi saints in villages should have been incorporated in the tourist map of the state.

Now that present government is busy making tall claims about giving a flip to tourist industry, it should ponder upon the issue and take immediate steps to promote heritage tourism.

PIR PANCHAL ROUTE

As the government appears all braced up to restore the forgotten historical road links to Kashmir, history obviously has some interesting facts to share about one such important route.

Notwithstanding the politics associated with the Mughal road, the road, historically known as the Pir Panchal road, once connected Srinagar with Lahore (Pakistan). This route is also known in history as the Salt route.

There is a common belief that Mughal emperors were the first who discovered this route. However, researches undertaken by Valley-based archaeologists suggest that it were not the Mughals, but the Hephthalites (a Central Asian tribe) who had discovered this mountain passage in 515 AD about one thousand years before the arrival of Mughals.

The Hephthalites' leader, Meharakula's evidences are still found on this historical route, which suggested that he has been the first king to have traveled through this route.

History records that this Hephthalites' leader was defeated by one Yous-uvarmin King of Central India. After facing defeat, Meharakula is learnt to have reached Sailkote (Pakistan).

But at Sailkote, the king did not feel safe. Having heard about the mountain-walled land of Valley of Kashmir, Meharakula sent his men to find out a suitable-mountain passage to hide himself in the mountain-protected Valley.

These men are learnt to have discovered, the Bimber Pass of Pir Panchal range a bit more convenient passage to this beautiful valley and its was through this mountain pass that Meharkula entered Kashmir in early 6th century AD.

Meharkula is learnt to have taken refuge in this mountain-walled Valley for years together. He is held responsible for destruction of numerous Buddhist stupas and monasteries during his stay in the Valley.

A legend reports that while on the way to this Valley, Meharakula lost about one hundred elephants of his royal caravan in the Pir Panchal range. History books record that as Meharakula was coming to the, valley at a place called Daripeer, on the western side of the Pir Panchal, an elephant accidentally fell into a deep gorge. The cries and shrieks of the dying elephant amused the king so much that he ordered hundred elephants thrown down the hill so that he could enjoy the spectacle. This is perhaps the reason why the place is even today known as Hastivanj - elephants' forest.

Few archaeological evidences related with Meharakula's visit by this route have also recently been noticed on this route.

A Valley based archaeologist claims to have deciphered (identified) an ancient copper coin hoard of Hephthalites period which was reportedly found from Pir Panchal pass. These coins were in copper and each coin weighed plus eight grams. These coins carried writings in classical Brahmi characters which revealed the names of few Hephthalites rulers.

This route later is said served as the salt route of the land. The salt was imported from the salt ranges of Punjab to Kashmir via this route.

Experts believe that it was lately when Mughals adopted this route and constructed it for their royal caravans; and since then it came to be known as the 'Mughal Road'.

RESHI MOL

The Urs of Baba Hardi Rishi (RA) popularly known as Reshi Moul was celebrated through out South Kashmir particularly in Islamabad town. There are reports that the Pandiths of the town also celebrated the Urs at their migrant places. The Muslim shrines and Khanqah's were decorated with coloured lights and a complete vegetarian week was observed. The meeting of special prayers, Darood- wa-Azkar & Khat-mat-tul-Mouzamat were held in mosques and Khanqah's. A big religious congregation was held at the Astern Aliya of Rishi where people irrespective of their creed and caste took part in the Urs and quenched their spiritual thirst.

Kashmir which has been titled Peer Vari hardly any day passes when any Urs of any Syed, Saint, Rishi at any place is not observed that too with full religions honour. There are various such occasions interesting to watch like the Urs of Baba Naseeb-ud-Din Gazi, at Bijbehara. This day is highlighted by the traditional Damali Dance like that of Haji Shamas-ud-Din (RA) at Parigam.

The Urs of Batamaloo Sahib (RA) at Srinagar is observed by abstaining meat. The Urs of Rishi Mol is observed by refraining meat and fish consecutively for seven days which is counted from Shawal 27 onwards. It is not

only Muslims of south Kashmir hut even the Pandiths on the town strictly follow the tradition. (However, few Muslims of some different school of thought do not observe it). The tradition of abstaining meat and fish alike dishes during the Urs days is very old here and there are legends accounted by historians which say that any body who do not honour it had to then pay huge losses.

Hassan in his Tareekh says that "once during the Urs days in his friend's house fire broke out and when people came to know the cause of fire it was observed that the family that evening had prepared meat which was felt the cause of fire."

Here are other such various examples. The people of south Kashmir had a great regard for this Rishi so they do not prepare such dishes during the Urs days.

Baba Hardi Rishi was born in a blacksmith's family, sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani (RA) as recorded by Hassan, had predicted hundred years before about the coming of this saint. It is said that the Rishi initially adopted Awasi line but later on entered into Shurwardi order. He received Khati-Irshad from Hazrat Sheikh Humzah Makhdoomi (RA). There are several spiritual incidents known of him. It is said that once a guest came to their house, his mother claimed that today that they received a fish in a gift but that

was unfortunately taken by an eagle. Rishi told her that when the fish was given to them how the eagle took that in the meantime the eagle returned the fish and kept it back to its original place.

It is said that the Rishi in his life time taste meat only once that too on the advice of his Peeri Murshed Harat Sheikh Humzah Makhdoomi (RA).

Sheikh Baba Dawood Khaki (RA) feels that there are several such things which are irrelevant to Muslim Shariah attributed with this Rishi but those are unfound and baseless. He had given a brief sketch of Rishi's life and works, he writes, "that the Rishi used to offer daily five times prayers and recited Awradi Fatah. He by his deeds and worship reached to the highest stage of tasawuf. He used to keep fast strictly and abstain from taking meat, Rishi built several mosques and guest house. He could understand the inner feelings of the living begin ... He had great effect in his prayers this is famous among his friends that by his prayers several patients got treated. He was Sheikh-ud-Din of his period."

The Rishis tomb is situated in the middle of Islamabad town and is visited every day by his devotees. The annual Urs of this shrine is celebrated with full religious colour and thousands of people drink deep into its spiritu-

ality. The shrine, besides is a glorious architecture edifice and symbolizes the traditional Rishi order of Kashmir architecture.

MIRZA HAIDER KASHGHARI

History witnesses that as and when Kashmiris were gripped by any internal political and social unrest, they approached for foreign assistance. At hard and crucial times, Kashmiri people sent their representatives to the powerful kingdoms for due assistance and help. The tradition of sorting foreign help of Kashmiris is as old as its history is. In medieval times when Kashmir's got tired of Kazi Chak's administration, they sent their representatives to Lahore and invited Mirza Haider Daughlat, cousin of Babar to Kashmir. In 1585 AD, when Kashmiri's peaceful life was distributed again by Yousuf Shah Chak, Kashmiri representatives approached Mughal emperor Akbar in Delhi and requested him to take up Kashmir throne from Yousuf Shah Chak. To overthrow the later Mughal Governor, Ahmed Shah Abdali was invited from Kabul in 1752. In 1818, Ranjeet Singh was also invited by Kashmiri people. All of these foreign missionaries entered Kashmir at their times and played their role in tackling the political and social crisis of Kashmir. They also participated in building of Kashmir economy. , In this line of foreign missionaries, Mirza Haider's contribution to Kashmir was an outstanding one. He never liked to take up Kashmir throne, instead keeping himself outside the chair sought place and prosperity to the land and its people.

Mirza Haider Daughlat known popularity as Mirza Haider Kashgari by Kashmiris was born in 1499 AD at Tashqand. He was a close relative of Mughal Emperor Babar Mirza was only 15, when he left Babar at Fargana and reached himself in Kashghar. In Kashghar, he joined the forces of Abu Saed Khan. By dint of his hard work, intelligence and faith, Mirza quickly succeed in winning the confidence of Abu Saed. In 1532, Abu Saed with his faithful Commander Mirza took an expedition towards Kashmir occupying Baltistan and Ladakh, moved towards the Kashmir valley. This was an unsuccessful expedition and Abu Saed's forces were compelled by the then ruler of Kashmir to depart valley. Though the Mirza in his Tarikhi Rashidi says that Khutba was read and coins were struck in the name of Abu Saed from Kashmir. But this leads us towards puzzle that no such coins of Abu Saed Khari are recorded in the numismatic collections of Kashmir.

After leaving Kashmir, Mirza Haider reached Lahore and met there his cousin Babar. It was the time when Mirza was at Lahore that he was approached by a Kashmiri named, Khawaja Haji there. Khwaja Haji was a Kashmiri representative, who briefed the Mughal administrators of the political and social unrest felt by Kashmiris in the hands of Kazi Chak (1538-40 AD). In spite of disapproval of rescuing Kashmiris from the worst ever distrust, Mirza

lonely left the Mughal court and moved towards Kashmir with his small number of forces, he entered the valley by way of Tossa Maidan pass. In Kashmir, he received the full support of Kashmiri masses, who were tired of Chak domination.

Mirza Haider was successful in his expedition and he occupied Srinagar in 1540 AD. The outstanding credit goes to Haider that after entering Srinagar, although he was in a good position to occupy the Kashmir throne, ' but he kept himself away from it. Instead he placed Nazuk Shah the most favourite noble of Kashmiri's on the throne.

Placing Nazuk Shah on throne Mirza Haider remained in Kashmir, for eleven years he served as an adviser to Nazuk Shah. During this period Kashmir recovered from its political and social unrest. Kashmir developed economically. Mirza encouraged the Kashmir arts and crafts. He also introduced many new arts in Kashmir.

On the one hand Mirza was engaged in developmental programmes of Kashmir valley while on the other hand the elements who had lost politically at the hands of Mirza Daughlat were reestablishing themselves on the borders of Kashmir with their headquarters at Khanpur-Rajouri. The rebels had occupied Khanpur fort and were involved in anti-Mughal activities. They killed Qara Ba-

hadur, the cousin of Mirza Haider. The tragedy unnerved Mirza. He left for Khanpur-Rajouri in security of Kashmir and Mughal forces. But at Khanpur Kashmiris lost their beloved foreign missionary, in an attack by Khanpur insurgents. The bad-news of Mirza's killing sent shock waves in Kashmir masses. Mirza Haider's body was brought to Srinagar where it was buried in the Mazar-e-Salateen of Kashmir.

Mirza Haider, says P N K Bamzai, in his chronicle, "was a versatile man, brave and adventurous and a patron of learning and art. He introduced new types in Kashmiri architecture. It was as a result of his encouragement that many of the arts and crafts introduced by Zain-ul-Abidin were revived". Mirza wrote many books, but his outstanding work was his Persian chronicle of Kashmir events named Tarikhi Rashidi.

The grave of Mirza Haider Khasghari is in a dilapidated condition. The inscribed stone slab was installed near the Mirza's grave by Moorcraft in 1824 AD. The inscription that carried some important information and events of Mirza's life is broken into pieces here.

LIVING WITHOUT PAPER

Extra ordinary usage of paper in our daily activities has made it the fashion of the day. Today activities of human culture are incomplete without the distance of paper mills. These paper mills have even destroyed the once famous handmade foolscap of this land. The speedy activities of individuals and institutions have generated the heed for enhancement of these paper mills. But when no paper was available to the early people, how and on what they were carrying their writing activities is an interesting subject to know. Writing has emerged in different nations at various cultural stages. In Kashmir writing was introduced very late. We have archaeological references of its introduction from early centuries of Christian era, keeping iconographical carvings aside. The classical scripts adopted in Kashmir. Were Kharoshrtā, Brahmi, Greek and Persian as universal one's whereas Sharada as the single local one. For writing purposes, Kashmiri engravers used stone-slabs, copper plates and coins as their means. The engraving on stone and copper plates looks very neat and clean. Sometimes the characters are raised also. In coins inscriptions are only raised. The die-strikers have always placed incomplete inscriptions. Sometimes characters are in a jumbled form. This must have been done intentionally, in order to check the forgeries of the coins. These inscribed

coins though contained something very little due to being small in size and shape but contained very informative. A large number of inscriptions have been found at various archaeological places in Kashmir and on its borders. The recent discoveries of Dr. Ahmad Hussian Dani, Kushan's is in Greek and Pak based Archaeologist, on Kharoshti scripts. The early Karakorum highways have enlightened a series of Kharoshti and Brahmi inscriptions. They have been cited on the sacred rock of Hunza. Various inscribed stone and copper plates have also been found at many places in Kashmir, besides a large number of inscribed coins. The inscribed material of Mauryan period before us is in Ashoken Brahmi character, while that of Kushans is in Greek and Kharoshti scripts. The early Hindu kings of Hindu Kashmir have followed the Gupta-Brahmi, while the later kings have strictly followed the local Sharda characters. Kashmir Muslim sultans brought Persian and Arabic from Persia and central Asian regions. The inscribed copper and stone plates, and coins belonging to these Sultans bear Persian and Arabic character. We have stone inscriptions of Sultan Sikander, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin Budshah and of others in Persian and Arabic. Persian came to be used as the court language of Kashmir from Budshah's times and that continued for a long time. Various messages, events and dates are inscribed on stone slabs and coins of these Sultans. The king Zain-ul-Abidine has been

reported to have served as Naib of Caliph of Baghdad. Till Budshah's time writing continued on the materials other than paper. This was the age of engravers. Sometimes the leaves of the bark tree provided its spaces for writers. Various ancient manuscripts have been found which are written on bark leaves. Such an ancient manuscript in classical Gilgittain characters from Gilgit is found ' preserved in the manuscript collection of Sri Partab Singh museum, Srinagar. Clay and earthen objects also served the engravers. But when king Zain-ul-Abidine occupied the throne of Kashmir, he introduced domestic paper making industry. The historian, G M D Sofi, views that Zain-ul-Abidine brought it from Samarqand. This Samarqandian paper industry in Kashmir established here its roots. Kashmir became famous for its paper, which was much needed in Indian states for manuscripts. The material involved in making of Kashmiri paper was pulp, the mixture of rags and hemp fibre, obtained by pounding these materials under a lever mill worked by water-power. Lime and Kiln, Somed of Soda were used to whiten the pulp, which were taken then from the mills in the Sindh valley and Dachigam Nallah to the factory in the city. "The pulp, so says Lawrence, is placed in stone troughs or baths and mixed with water, and from this mixture a layer of the pulp is extracted on a light frame of reeds. This layer is the paper, which is pressed and dried in the sun. Next, it is polished with pum-

ice stone, and then its surface is glazed with rice water. A final polishing with onyx stone is given, and the paper is then ready for use". This Kashmiri domestic paper continued to meet the paper needs of India since very long, till paper mills equipped well with advanced technology were set up there. These paper mills then destroyed the once famous handmade foolscap of Kashmir. Since Budshah's times domestic paper served the writers. Engravers age turned in the beautiful penmanship's age. But still stone slabs, plates and coins carried engraved inscription for a very long period and continued to keep no striking end of the writing patch alive.

KASHMIR SHAWLS

Mirza Haider Dughlat while referring Kashmir Arts and crafts, speaks in his book titled, "Tarikh-i-Rashidi" that in Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon such as stone polishing, stone cutting, bottle-making window cutting, gold beating etc in the whole of Maver-ul-Nahr (the country beyond the river Oxus i.e. Khorasan) except in Samarkand and Bukhara, there are no where to be met with while in Kashmir they are even abundant. This is all due to Sultan Zain-ul-Abidine. Kashmir shawl producing craft is also absorbed with Zain-ul-Abidin's period. Though we have Archaeological evidences before us of the presence of shawl in easily historical period. Terre-cotta's tiles excavated from, Harwan Lishkaf and Darad-Kote bear dressed human carving scenes. A Dan lady is shown dancing with her blanket on an tile from Harwan dated to early centuries of Christian era in other Hindu religions sculptures, various deities had been shown wearing some sort of blankets and skirts. But one cannot be certain about these blankets to be a shawl. The original history of shawl can be accounted from Sultan Zain-ul-Abidine period. How does it come to be known as shawl an interesting legend is accounted by P N K Bamzai in his book history of Kashmir; He speaks that Nagz Beg resident of Khokund in Central Asia entered the vale in the

time of Mirza Haider Dughlat. He presented a pashmina piece to Mirza Haider what is this asked Mirza Haider, a shawl was the reply, he called it by this name because the people of the Khakand call a blanket a shawl in their own tongue. It is said since then it came to be known as shawl. So this Kashmiri blanket has taken its name from an central Asian Pashmina piece. Called shawl This than became the typical name for Kashmir weaven woolen cloth. Shawls are embroidered also, one more legend regarding the emergence of Kashmir shawl embroidery accounted by Bamazi, tells that Amlikar Shawl owes its origin to the futile imagination of the Kashmir artisan named Ala Baba, who livid in the time of Azad Khan (Afghan Governor) it is said that Ala Baba was led to this pattern of shawl manufacturing by a fowl walking on a white sheet of cloth which left the imprints of its dirty feet on it. He embroider the spots with coloured thread and cloth looking prettier with this design came to be manufactured in large quantities Budshah encouraging the Kashmir craft Artists, also invited artists from Samarkand and Bukhara, and left on stone unturned to develop Kashmir shawl manufacturing units. Moghals encouraged the artists in making different kinds of shawls Abu-Fazal in his tarikh, a in Akbari providing the details of the different kinds of shawls made during the Akbar's time says that his majesty had order four kinds to be made, first toos Asel, which is the wool of an

animal of this name whose natural colour in general is grey inkling to red, though some are perfectly white; and these shawls are incomparable for lighness, warmth and softness. Formerly they were always made with the will in its surprising they will not take the red colour. Second, safed Alcheh which they also call Tarehdar. The natural colour of this wool are white or black; and they weave three sorts of them, white, black and grey. Formerly there were not above three or four colours of shawls but his majesty has made them of various hues. Third Zardozy, Culabetun, Kheshdes, Gulgha, Bandein, Cheet, Alcheh and Perzdar, which of this majesty's invention. Fourth from being school pieces he had them made long enough for Jamas attempted to take shawl manufacturing units to Lahour, Agra and Patna like plain areas, but due to hot climate there they failed in their experiment. Shawl industry in early Afghan rule faced a get setback, but it was soon re-established by Atta Muhammad Khan on Afghan Governor and it was during his period that it became traveled to international market, Europeans adopted the shawl fashion, where it was carried by Napoleon who received Mirza Haider Daghalt speaks of number of mulberry trees cultivated for their leaves continued to flourish under the Mughals too, "the mulberry is little eaten" Abul Fazal writes its leaves being reserved for the silk worm. The eggs were brought from Gilgit and Ladakh and were reared in the valley. But the production of

silk in Kashmir was worked locally and does not appear to have been extensive. However the small quantity of fibre that was produced was exported to India, it as a gift from Khadine. Those shawls were produced by means of precious wool obtained from animals bred, such as the local sheep, the goats of Angora, Korman Tibet and Camels of Bukhara.

Besides, precious woolen shawls, we have references of production of silk textiles from Kashmir. Silk initially was supplied by China in early historical period but since medieval period we have clear references of domestic silk productions inspite of the fact that shawl and silk manufacturing industries experienced many vicissitudes, it yet proved a constant source of much income and revenue for the rulers of Kashmir.

COINAGE ITS EVOLUTION

The frequent movement of man in search of pasture lands for his domesticated animals brought him into contact with his fellow men at distant places. He began to take benefit from each other findings and tried to evolve some mechanism for exchange of things. In absence of some systematic method, he exchanged a commodity and the system is commonly known as 'Barter System'. He continued the search for some kind of mechanism having little, chances of loss to either party. He laid his hands on the metals as he found it durable and convenient to carry.

The countries to introduce firstly metallic currency in the world were Greek and Romans, where the kings stamped small pieces of gold, silver etc. guaranteeing the pieces as to weight and fitness. The system was taken by Indians who introduced their own coinages in sub continent. We have the references of metallic currency in later verdic periods. These were the small metal pieces bearing some minute impressions, but the actual exchange mechanism based on silver and copper coins evolved in the sub-continent not before 500 BC. These small pieces of metal, commonly known as punch marka coins were introduced in the sub-continent by several Janapadha's and Maha-Janapadha's (small and major states). These coins bear some impressions on their obverse, stamped on by

separate dies. The motifs guaranteed the metal purity and weight standards. These punch marks coins' were struck on Indian weight standard based on Karaihapana weight standards and weigh, under 3 grams. Muranyens continued their minus with universal type of punch marka coins.

The antiquity of Kashmir coins like other parts of the continent goes beyond the Kushana times. We have got the physical evidence of punch marka coins in circulation in Kashmir during Pre-Indo-Greek periods. Such Punch marka coins bear one to five different symbols on its obverse while the Reverse is blank or in some cases bear a few minute symbols.

They are struck on Indian weight standard which at those times was based on Karshapana weight standard. Two such Punch marka coins are preserved in Sri Partap Singh Museum, Srinagar. A few Punch marka coins of 3rd or 4th Century BC were also found during the excavation at Semethian, Bijbehara in South Kashmir. After the collapse of Mauryan empire the Indo-Greeks in about 2nd century BC occupied the Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indian parts. They introduced their own Bi-metallic type coinage in silver and copper. These coins are inscribed and carried legends in Greek and Kharosheti characters giving the title and the name of issues. Their issues include drachms and tetradrachms struck on Indo-Greek weight standard. We

have also come across several Indo-Greek drachms from Jehlum valley. A few Greek drachms were also found in one of the layers at Semithian archaeological site. Several Indo-Greek coins are preserved in our State Museum. After the collapse of Indo-Greeks we see Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthian appearing on the political scene of the sub-continent parts and existed till the arrival of Kushans. Our Kashmiri coin collection includes the coins of Indo-Sythian and Indo-Parthiari rulers. Kushans here issued their coins in Gold and Copper. A new motif with king standing on the obverse and seated deity on the reverse was introduced by them. They adopted Roman weight standards for gold dinars while in their copper issues they followed the Indo-Greek weight standard. After the downfall of Kushans, Kashmir and some other parts of the sub-continent were taken by Hun' rulers. They discontinued the Kushans gold dinars from the Kashmir money market, and allowed the Kushana typical copper coins to circulate. In about 650 AD Kashmir Kingdom came under the rulership of local Hindu Raja's. They, like Hun's did not effect any change in the currency system of Kashmir, till the advent of Muslim sultans.

In 14th Century AD Muslim Sultans discontinued the Kashmiri Hindu coin and introduced Muslim coins in Kashmir. These sultans issued silver and copper coins

with Arabic legend on them. The other remarkable change that occurred during the sultanate period in Kashmir coinage, was the introduction of mint name' and 'date' on the reverse of the coins.

In 1588 AD, Kashmir was annexed by Akbar and for some time he continued with the system which prevailed during the Sultan period. But, in order to maintain the uniformity in the system, Akbar after some time introduced imperial type coins and issued them from Kashmir mint with Kailma on obverse and mint name with date on its reverse. His son Jehangir and grandson Shah Jahan continued the pattern of Akbar but Aurangzeb made certain changes when he dropped to inscribe Kailma on the coins and placed his name with titles on the observe.

Mughals were followed by Durrani's who also issued coins in silver and copper from the Kashmir mint. They continued their coinage on the Mughal Pattern, but a remarkable thing that is observed on their coins is the inscription of Persian Couplets. Durran's were succeeded by Sikhs, who besides continuing the Durrani currency issued their own coins, with Persian and Gurmukhi characters. Besides other mints like Akal Taqith Amritsar and Lahore, their coins were also issued from Kashmir mint. Sikhs were followed by Dogra Maharaja's who besides, issuing coins also introduced the paper money from Kash-

mir, This paper money was issued from Srinagar during the rule of Ranbir Singh (1875-1885 AD) Dorgra coins are also known from Jammu and Ladakh mint.

This paper was presented by the author in a seminar of "Conservation and Excavation", organized by State Archives, Archaeology and Museum Department at Mubarak Mandi, Jammu.

SULTAN SADAR-UD-DIN

While passing through Alikadal in down town of Srinagar, a grave in a dilapidated condition is seen in the graveyard of Khanqah Bulal Shah. The grave belongs to Sultan Sadur-ud-Din. The first Muslim Sultan of Kashmir who ruled Kashmir during 1320-23 AD. Sultan Sadar-ud-Din originally a lama of Tibet embraced Islam at the hands of Turkish, Suffi-Sayyied Sharaf-ud-Din. The Tibetan Prince named Rinchan arrived Kashmir in the time of Sahadeva. Embracing Islam the Prince attained the new name of Shadur-ud-Din. After proclaiming the king of Kashmir in 1320, Sadar-ud-Din died only after his limited kingship of three years in 1323, and was buried in the ground of Khanqah Bulbul Shah at Bulbul Lankar Srinagar. Rinchan Shah popularly known by Sadar-ud-Din arrived Kashmir at the time when Kashmiris had to face the loot arson, murder and rape through the cruel hands of Dulchu, Dulchu was a Tatar Chief from Turkistan. He was the son of notorious oppressor Chingiz Khan. During Dulchu's attack in early years of 14th century Kashmir throne was in the hands of Sahadeva. When Sahadeva heard of Dulchu he fled to Kishtiwari and left the Kashmiris to face the Dulchu.

It was at this crucial stage of Kashmir history that Rinchan Shah appeared on the political screen of Kashmir and extended his love and faith to Kashmiri people. He

and Shah Mir provided aid to Kashmiris in opposing the unscrupulous and cruel invader. Rinchan Shah through this way gained the good will of Kashmiris. Ranchan married the Kota Rani. The daughter of Ramchandra and proclaimed himself the king of this land.

Rinchan was actually a Buddhist from Tibet. He was the offspring of the noble family of the then ruling dynasty of Tibet. Their ruling dynasty in Tibet had to face the revolt from their countrymen. In this revolt Rinchina lost his father. He migrated from Tibet and established himself in Ladakh. From here he proceeded towards Srinagar, in early years of 14th century. Gaining the good will of Kashmir masses Rinchan proclaimed himself the King of Kashmir in 1320 AD. Rinchan was not satisfied with his religious beliefs, he was fed up of his ancestors religions beliefs so he wanted a change in his social life. Before him were two options, either to follow his beloved wife Kota Rani or to embrace Islam that had hardly entered in the valley. There are two interesting legends accounted by historians, about the conversion of Rinchan.

PNK Bamzai in his chronicle writes that after getting disappointed and disgraced from the behaviour and attitude of Hindu. Pandits, one night Rinchan had to pass restless hours was there no spiritual solace for him? Suddenly, in the early hours of the morning he was roused

from his disturbed sleep by the sharp and loud voice of the Muazin — “There is no God but God and Muhammad (SAW) is his Prophet” looking out of the window he observed the devout Bulbul Shah at Prayer. He went to his presence and was admitted to Islam.

The other legend adds that one night Rachina decided to follow up the religion of that man, who meets him first in the morning on the next morning Sayyied Bulbul Shah who was proceeding towards the mosque for attending prayers, met on his way to Rinchan Shah near his Shahi Mahal. Rinchan requested the Sayyied about his religion, beliefs. The Sayyied disclosed his identity and advised the king to follow up the path of Islam if he really intends to get rid of worldly anxieties and to satisfy the spiritual hunger. Rinchan who had already made up his mind to follow the religion of that man who meets him first in the next morning was really impressed by the advice of Sayyied Bulbul Shah. Rinchana embraced Islam on the hands of the Sayyied.

Sayyid Sharaf-ud-Din Bulbul Shah, a Musvi Syed from Turkistan was a disciple of Shah Nimat Ullah Faris of the Suhar Wardi School of Sufis. Being a devout Sufi, Sayyid Sharaf-ud-Din laid the foundation of Sufi movement in Kashmir. He encouraged Suffism in his propagation of Islam in Kashmir.

Sadar-ud-Din's rule was a short glorious period of Kashmir, he filled the Kashmir political vacuum for a short period. He dispensed Justice impartially. Stories of Sadar-ud-Din Justice that still are preserved well in Kashmiri tradition tells us of his wisely handling of the sensitive cases. One of the such stories accounted by the historians regarding the handling of a case says that once a peasant gave birth to a foal, which was nursed, by another mare whose foal had died a few days earlier. When the mares were brought to the village, a dispute ensured as to the ownership of the foal. Each claimed it to be the offspring of his mare. The king took the mares and the foal in a boat to the middle of the lake and pushed out the water. The real mother jumped after him and thus the riddle was resolved. Sultan Sadar-ud-Din founded a town after his earliest name. He built the tomb and Khanqah of Bulbul Shah at Bulbal Lankar Srinagar. These two structures were then re-constructed, again. At the site hardly any ruin of Sadar-ud-Din is preserved except the grave of the Sultan which is also kept in dilapidated condition.

HAZRAT SHAMS-UD-DIN AND HIS TOMB

Kashmir valley, the land of Muslims Saints and Sufies, carries in its lap the marvelous Muslim architecture of Rishi order. These are the structures raised over the resting places of Kashmiri Rishis and Sufis. The shrines of central Asian Islamic mission arises are also seen in the corners of this holy land. It is not only the cities and towns who house this Muslim architectural treasure. These structures appear in well preserved condition in rural areas too. Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy in her Kashmir Encyclopedia had attempted well to provide its readers the history and other spiritual and architectural details of these Muslims Zairats. But still large work is needed to record them all. This encyclopedia has missed several Muslim shrines existing in far-flung areas of the valley. Last week when I was in South Kashmir I had a chance to see few of such magnificent architectures in many of the villages. At village Parigam 14 kms from Islamabad in its west I saw an ignorant Muslim shrine of a Saint preserved well by the villagers themselves.

This small village flourished on the right bank of Nallah Sonman is approached by a motorable road from Islamabad. Representing the sheen and glory of the area, the shrine symbolizes the wooden architecture of Kashmir of its early 19th century. The shrine that has lost most of its

interesting architectures features is restored in new form. An wooden inscription preserved in the shrine gives its foundation date as AH 1236-which corresponds the year 1821 AD. The shrine is square in plan and measures about 18 fts square. The plinth now covered over with cement plaster is actually formed of round builders taken from Nallah Sonaman. The central chamber above the plinth measures 13 ft sq. It is built of bricks and coated internally by thick coat of lime plaster, while the exterior of the chamber now roughly plastered in cement, basically had carried beautiful papier-mache designs. The entrance to the chamber is as usually on southern side. It is a wooden doorway and doors are formed of little pieces of wood, providing best example of Kashmiri lattice work. The ceiling is simply designed and is supported by columns laid over the verandah around the central chamber. The columns 20 in number are finely finished and designed well. The bays of the chamber are filled with elaborate trellis formed of little pieces of wood. The low pyramidal roof projecting over the whole edifice is built in three tiers with size diminishing in each successive tier. It is supported by the chamber wall, columns and slanting brackets. Brackets finished well are also carved in several designs and shaped in peacock style. The roof initially was laid in birch bark with a rising earthen steeple, says the attendant of the shrine. But to-day it has lost all such classical features.

Inside the central chamber is the grave of the Saint, covered over with a lovely cenotaph (Zarih) also formed of latticework? An stone slab carved in full blown Lotus follower, is load seen inside the main chamber.

As per the records preserved in the shrine. The shrine belongs to Haji Shamus-din, one another unknown Reshi of Kashmir. A brief historical outline what I have able to extract from the Persian manuscripts here, speaks that family of Hazrat Muhammad Arif, from Pompur-Srinagar migrated in late sixties and stalled at Dalwach in Pargana Shahabad in district Islamabad.

Arif had two sons from his single wife called Haji-Ded. His elder son named Shams-ud-Din Arif since his childhood developed an contemplative mind and followed Baba Naseeb-ud-Din Gazi 'Qudrat-ul-Lane Zain-ul-Abidine Iman Azam II'. Shamas-ud-Din under guidance of his Peer left worldly ambitions aside. He strictly followed the path of Reshi movement and with his extraordinary saintly character, marked his place in the row of well known sufis of the day. Shams-ud-Din attained the title of Shahjahan II and Fath-ullah from his Peeri Mursheed. During the period of his meditation Shams-ud-Din under took the spiritual tour of the whole south Kashmir. He spent a great time at village Parigam in Pragan Arawani where his soul left for heaven and it was here that the shrine was erected

Hazrat Shams-ud-Din and his tomb

over the grave of the Saint. There are several interesting legends related with this Saint. One of the legends speak that Shams-ud-Din in his life had attended Haj pilgrimage several times that too by feet. This is because of this that Saint's tomb is also known here as Haji's tomb. The Urs Sheirf at the Zairat is celebrated every year in the month of May. It is celebrated on the same pattern of his Peer - Murshid's Urs that is celebrated every year at Bijbehara.

Edgah Sangam

The small hamlet on the outskirts of Srinagar namely Sangam Edgah turned more historic when recently a hoard of ancient coins was found recovered from the village. The news was carried almost by all local dailies. As per reports, the BSNL authorities had engaged labourers for laying of cable in the village and while digging a portion of the channel labourers came across a broken earthen pitcher which carried several number of ancient coins. The news of discovering a hoard spread. SHO Safa Kadal Abdul Rashid was more active who along with his police party rushed to the spot and collect the coins. Director Archives and Archaeological Muhammad Hussain Makhdoomi approached police authorities and recovered the coins. A team of experts was also sent to the village to verify the finds.

The village Sangam is situated on the Western bank of the neglected Anchar Lake. It is about six kms distant from Srinagar. A rough road leads to it from Qamarwari locality I could see no any other vehicular traffic other than Municipality trucks loaded with garbage on this link road. It was very surprising that the area which is so near to Srinagar city depicted a view of utterly neglected area.

The entire locality is historical one which also has

been possessing a few olden antiquities. On the road side there are seen few ruins of some olden graveyard over a massive stone platform. A historical shrine at village Sangam is dedicated to the saint and scholar Baba Naseeb-ud-din Gazi (RA). Who is believed to have stayed in the village for sometime?

This recent numismatic discovery of this neglected area not only had made it more historic but even added a new page to the cultural history of the land yet the coins are heavily defaced by dust and patina and unless these are not chemically treated their proper study is difficult. However, I could get one piece of the hoard which the SHO Safa Kadal had got cleaned. It depicted traces of Persian inscription. The primary observation of the hoard suggests these as Mughal Copper Coins, known by the name Dam. This was a very popular coin type of Mughal emperors, struck first by Akbar Shah in 963 AH. It weighed 320 grains. Such coins are often found even in remote villages of the valley.

Although the ancient coins and other archaeological artifacts are found here but maximum of these finds go unnoticed. Even the collected materials are less cared. The department of Archaeology and Museums which is entrusted this job since decades had kept no record of its archaeological finds spots. What they have collected they

their-selves did not knew. This priceless heritage material has been dumped in the lockers of SPS Museum at Lal Mandi. It is entirely unexposed which is a great tragedy with our cultural heritage.

There has been no efforts to open these lockers and maintain a proper record. The cataloguing, publishing and study of these material evidences by the government looks here a very distant dream. The Research and Publication unit added to the Museums of Archives Department since for last several decades have totally turned defunct, no steps were ever taken to review them. On the other hand crores of rupees are being spent on Aasar Mahal at Boulevard, Srinagar in the name of promoting archaeological but for what purpose? What government has served to house it in proposed Mahal? Had these authorities even seen the priceless collections turning worthless items in SPS Museums at Lal Mandi. If Aasar Mahal is built to promote dance and club culture in the state then authorities have every reason to invest on the project; but if they say archaeological museum they have first restore the archaeological collections housed in Rambir Mahal at Lal Mandi. May please do not exploit the proposed complex at the Boulevard in the name of unfortunate archaeological collections of this unfortunate nation.

If authorities really, do not want to preserve this her-

itage, let the collections of the museum be handed over to any European Museum. Whom can study it, make its record and catalogue and maintain it properly. We are doing nothing except helping to destroy our evidences of glorious history and culture.

The recent numismatic discovery from Edgah Sangam is one such another hoard which despite of adding one more page to our cultural history shall get lost in one of the lockers of the museum.

KASHGARI AND KASHMIR

The Mughals entered the valley in 1586-87 and continued here upto 1751 AD. However we have ample records to show that prior to Akbar, Mughals made several attempts to subjugate Kashmiris. Many times Kashmiris themselves invited them to rule Kashmir. Baber's generals were first to invade Kashmir. In Humayoun's reign Meherum Kowkeh had subdued Kashmir. But he could not hold it any more. It was none except Mirza Haider Daughlat who conquered it for Humayn before Akbar's annexation of this land. He prevailed upon the Kashmiris to read Kutbah in the name of Humayoon. He struck many copper and silver coins in his master's name; such coins carried Al-Sultan-ul-Azam Muhammad Humayun Gazi on obverse and dates and mint name Zarbi Kashmir on reverse. These coins have also been found in association with Nazuk Shah's coins.

The contributions made by Mirza Haider Daughlat during his eleven years in Kashmir politics, administration, art and learning are outstanding. Much has been written and said on the subject in Kashmir chronicles. However, the missionaries' contributions today are in a state of neglect. He has been totally forgotten. Our people even do not remember his name; very few people know where the grave of Mirza lies. Mirza's name hardly figures in our day

to day seminars and symposia. Despite our non-seriousness the Kashmir history has blessed him with a vide coverage.

Mirza Haider Daughlat popularly know by Kashmiris by the name of Mirza Kashgari arrived in Kashmir at a time when Kashmiris were held in worst ever social and political crises. It was Kazi Chak's period (1538 AD) that people got tired of his cruel administration and if they had any hope that was from Mughal administration. By the time Mirza Haider had reached Lahore. Khawaja Hajji a distinguished Kashmiri representative went to Lahore and briefed mughal administration of the political and social unrest felt by Kashmiris in the hands of Qazi Chak. He invited Mughals to invade Kashmir and freed its people from the Kazi chak's tyrannous administration. As history reveals, the Mughal Darbar did not give their consent to the expedition but Mirza could better understand the Kashmir crises. He ignored the instruction of his master and left the Mughal court with a odd number of his forces to help Kashmiris. He invaded valley via Tossmaidan pass. He was successful in this most difficult expedition and occupied Srinagar city .in 1540 AD. He was not hungry of power. He could have easily ascended the throne but he invited Nazuk Shah who was popular among locals and placed him on the throne of Kashmir He remained in Kash-

mir for eleven years and struck coins too in his master's name. History reveals that with the arrival of Mirza Haider the country recovered from its political and social unrest. Peace and stability returned.

History has recorded that Mirza Haider was born in 1499 AD at Tashqand. He was only 15 when he left for Kashgar and joined the forces of Abu Saed Khan. By dint of his hard work he was appointed commander of Saed's forces. He led several successful expeditions. His final expedition was Kashmir.

History reveals that in Kashmir Mirza got engaged not only in social and political stability but even took keen interest in the economic development of the country. He encouraged the arts and crafts of Kashmir and introduced many new crafts. He introduced the tradition of Sheer Chai (Salt Tea) here.

Historians have described him a versatile man, brave and adventurous and a patron of learning and art. He is credited with having introduced new types in Kashmir architecture. Mirza wrote several books but his outstanding work is his Persian chronicle of Kashmir events named Tarikhi-Rashidi.

After serving Kashmir for eleven years, he got killed at Khanpur in an attack launched against him. History

mentions that the people who had lost political authority at Mirza's hands were re-establishing themselves on the borders of Kashmir. The rebels had occupied Khanpur-fort and were involved in anti-mughal activities. They first killed Mirza's cousin, Qara Bhadur, and later these insurgents attacked Mirza Haider near Khanpur. It sent shock waves throughout Kashmir. The people went to Khanpur and brought Mirza's body to Srinagar where it was buried in the Mazar-e-Salateen of Kashmir at Maharaj Gunj.

Unfortunately the grave of this beloved foreign missionary is unprotected. It is in a dilapidated condition. The inscribed stones on the grave are broken. Moorcraft who visited this grave in 1824 AD installed an informative stone slab on the grave. However this inscription too is neglected.

This site requires to be renovated and fenced. The agencies looking after the monuments and cultural heritage of Kashmir must come forward and protect the site from future decay. It is not only this historical grave of Mirza Haider Daughlat, the entire Salateen's Mazar is neglected.

FESTIVAL AT BIJBEHARA

Kashmir is the land of fairs and festivals. And people here have their own way to celebrate them. Most of these festivals are associated with the saints and mystics of this land as birthdays and anniversaries; urs as called in the local parlance is annually celebrated occasion at a Muslim shrine. Hardly any day passes when there is no Urs celebration in any part of the valley. Kashmir has been the land of hundreds of Muslim Sufi Saints and mystics. Their shrines besides other things, symbolize the local architecture, popularly known as Rishi order.

During the Urs days these glorious shrines are decorated with Kashmiri candles Kashur Chung. These fairs in olden times were celebrated with full pomp and show but due to changing times and other engagements most of the fairs are now celebrated in a simple way. Still there are occasions where the Urs days of few Rishis and saints are celebrated with traditional colour and gaiety.

It is very amusing to participate in any such Urs of a Kashmiri saint, where you will definitely feel something different. These saints have contributed a lot towards the development of a constructive social and spiritual order in the Kashmir society. They have carved a name through their good virtues and deeds.

One such Saints who's Urs is still celebrated in a unique style and with full traditional order is Baba Naseem-ud-Din Gazi (RA) at bijbehara. The saint is rightly titled as Abul Fuqra the father of the poor. The poor people known as Fuqra are associated with the shrine of the saint. They are not invited but during the Urs days they come to the shrine in groups and pay homage to their peer by performing the Dhamali.

The saint is said to have cared for the poor throughout his entire life. Legend goes that in his darbar daily thousands of poor were served food and other necessities and whenever he was out, he was accompanied by thousands of followers. Wherever he reached his followers used to beat drums and dance on its tunes to call people for construction of Mosques and other public works.

The saint after 500 years is also revered well and people have got deep attachment with his glorious shrine at Baba Mohalla, Bijbehara. Hundreds of devotees visit daily his shrine. A heavy rush of devotees is seen during the Urs days, usually in June. The Urs is celebrated on the pattern of a Mela (festival) popularly known by Vyejbaer Mela.

The poor and deprived tribe called Dhamali faqirs who consider the saint as their Abuarribe here in various

groups and pay homage to their Pir by performing Dhamali. They come here with a traditional Alam (flag). The Dhamali Faqirs from Zalura, Charar-e-Sharief are considered the seniors. Hence the Alam rests with them. Different groups of the tribe have got their areas surrounding the historic town and they reach to their respective areas few days before the commencement of the Urs and perform dances which they consider as their traditional duty. Today this tribe is no less advanced than others but they give its credit to Abul Fuqra and take pride in performing their duties.

The performance of Dhamali dance during the Urs days of the saint and his disciplines is centuries old and like the festival of Ashmuqam which is observed in entire south Kashmir during the month of April, this Dhamali festival is unique and most popular one. Dozens of groups comprising hundreds of artists from Zalura, Wathura, Waripura, Panzgam, Devsar, Nabal, Akihgarn, Mohripura, Nagabal, Chiyert Edigarn, Kellar Maspura, Parigam, Kalishah Sahib and several other places gather in the Bijbehara town and perform their 'duty'. A massive demonstration of the traditional dances is held on the 12th of the month in the premises of the Khanqah at Baba Mohalla.

The Dhamali dancers arrive the holy shrine barefooted wearing traditional green and yellow dresses.

Some are also seen wearing turbans. The whole contingent beats drums while one of them carries the Alam (flag) identifying their area.

It is silence all along the ground except the sounds of drum beating and Dhamalies leaping and jumping. Dancing to the hilt several dancers go so deep that they later fall unconscious.

There are few dancers who actually do not belong to the tribes of Faqirs but had a great regard for the Dhamalis. Muhammad Akbar Dar of Voranhall, Anantnag who accompanies the Chiyen Edigam group of dancer's doe so for the last several years, on the advice of his parents. "My mother had no baby. She did not leave any Pir or Faqir to acknowledge his favour. She then came to the shrine of Baba during the Dhamali festival and sought the favours of the Dhamali Faqirs, she was heard by the God and awarded with a son who is before you". There are other people also who have similar tales to tell.

You can watch parents temporarily giving their infants in dancer's lap to acknowledge the favour of the Baba. The Dhamali is followed by prayers. The Faqirs mainly pray for adequate rainfall and crop favourable climate. The show continues up to till every group attends Khanqah and seeks the blessing of the Baba.

SULTAN SIKANDER

This has been the tradition of Kashmir historiography that it goes on to repeat the historical events as are already accounted by the on temporary historians. The historians hardly had ever-minded to scrutinize the debatable facts by any other collaborative source viz. Archaeology, Numismatic and inscriptional. Unfortunately this irresponsible act of history writing has brought forth such chronologies and histories which have been, found full of exaggeration by modern scholars. Erecting the plinth of their hypothesis on the base, provided by the highly exaggerated book like "Rajatarangni" those contemporary historians have attempted to deface the images of several of illustrious kings of Kashmir by developing high exaggerations in their accounts.

In their list, the most unfortunate king who had suffered through their pen is the "Sultan Sikandar" who is highly criticized by almost all quarters for his so-called non-tolerance towards his non-Muslim subjects. He is blamed to have encouraged the forcible conversion and destroyed all the temples and idols of Hindu gods and goddesses. Several of the Persian historians have named him as "Butshikan" idol breaker. Jonaraja the contemporary historian of the Sultan Sikandar in his part of Rajtarangni had held responsible Sikander for destroying all the temples

of Kashmir. If Jonaraja is questioned that had he watched the episode of Sultan destroying the Hindu temples. What shall be his reply? His reply shall be certainly in negative. Because he never had seen himself Sultan destroying the temples. He has based his wrong hypothesis on the information's provided by other historians of the day. Mirza Haider Daughter of Kashgar had recorded 150 lofty Hindu idol temples in well-preserved condition in 1541 AD when he visited Kashmir. He was astonished by the size and style of these, temples. He is the historian who soon followed the Jonaraja. Not only Mirza Haider, emperor Janagir clearly speaks of those lofty temples as constructed before , the advent of Islam in Kashmir were in existence at the time of his visit in Kashmir in 1623. G T Vigne a European visitor, who had visited Kashmir in 1842, saw as many as 70 to 80 temples in good condition in towns of Kashmir. So, it clearly looks that Jonaraja's statement of destruction of temples by Sultan Sikandar is a n high exaggeration. Perhaps he has based his exaggerations on the wrong information's provided by Kalhana when he later referred that here was no space left without a temple. Kalhana's account of temples is further not supported by neither any archaeological source nor any other literary source. A remarkable archaeological discovery recently in Srinagar "Ganpathyar" has further challenged all those historians who had attempted to deface the Sultan Sikandar's image

as a tolerant Muslim ruler. This is a sculptural slab located at the temple of Ganesha at Aanpatyar, Srinagar. The image identified as that of Brahma had an inscription in Sharada that reads that the image has been consecrated in the reign of Sikandar. Prof S L Shali in his recently published remarkable book titled as "Kashmir - History and Archaeology through the ages" writes, "The dedicatory inscription in Sharada at the base of Brahma Sculpture has been presented as (sam) (85). (?) Sri Sikandara Saha Reoye Sangapati Rahulya Kastvekeha Latha.... in explaining the meaning of the inscription it has been said that Sikandara Saha is the Sultan Sikandar and the year 85 refers to the Laukika era commonly in Kuse in Kashmir and corresponds to 1409 which falls well within the reign of illustrious. Sultan Sikandar..... Accordingly the Sultan has been introduced as a liberal king who gave religious freedom to non-Muslim. However, the destruction of several temples during Sultan Sikandar period can never be railed over, but that distraction was carried out by the people themselves. People converted to Islam, after conversion destroyed then old shrines and erected mosques over those ancient sites. This was natural phenomena people entering into Islam had to goodbye old traditions and customs and follow the teachings of Islam. This could not be tolerated by the Hindu fundamentalists, they fled from Kashmir and some preferred to die rather than to watch the new revolution.

But Sultan Sikandar shall never be blamed for all. He like other Sultans of Kashmir had showed a tolerance, towards his non-Muslim subjects. Sikandar was the first King of the Sub-continent to have abolished the custom of Sati among Hindus, Sikander although does not seem to have been a well read man yet he patronized literary men. To his court were attracted scholars from all parts of Central Asia viz. Khosasan, Transoxiana and Mesopotamia. Sultan was a great builder. He had constructed numerous mosques and monasteries of the wooden type of architecture. His monumental structures still dominate the Muslim architecture of Kashmir Khanqah Moula, Jamia Masjid, Idd Gah and numerous mosques and tombs although repaired and renovated from time to time, yet reminds us of Sikandar's constructive period.

Sultan Sikandar who began his career as a king under his mother Haura, ruled Kashmir and its hilly Districts of Jammu, Ladakh, Rajouri, Poonch even Gandhara from 1389 to 1413 AD. He was succeeded by king Zain-ul-Abidin in 1413.

CULTURE, DROP BY DROP

The book titled *Rash-Haati-Aiyaam* (drops of the period) is a wonderfully conceived recent publication on the literary and cultural history of the land. The Kashmiri critic and writer Syed Rasool Pampur. The author is widely known in literary and poetic circles for his various superb literary works.

The monogram under review has been written in very sweet and simple Urdu which is the first characteristic feature of the book. Its title is very selective and meaningful whereunder are documented the important drops of the time. The book has also got an attractive get-up. As soon the book got released it created a stir in the literary circles of the land. In itself the author has created and documented something special which required of a genuine treatment.

I feel it would be improper to say something on the book if a brief introduction of the author is not given. The author who few years back retired as editor (*Shiraza*) had been involved with writing since 1962. He has so far written about two dozens books and also edited several volumes of Cultural Academy's *Shiraza* and Sahitya Academy's monograms. For this he received several literary awards as well. He has got two Sahitya Academy awards to his

credit one as a creative writer and the other as a translator.

Bawath Te Alamath, Safead Sangar, Yeth Adam Vanes Munz Wani Kour Ghaz, Keinth Nat Keinh and Mezqan are among his popular works. Muhammad Yousuf Taing says Pompori is the first Kashmir author of distinction.

Pompour's this most recent work in Urdu is a collection of about two dozen essays on literary and cultural history of the land. He has maintained a fine sequence of his write ups, the first article Kashmir Ki Tarikh Ke Makazh gives a detailed sketch of various literary and archaeological sources of Kashmir history viz. Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Archaeological, Numismatic and folklore works. He has also take note of various European missionaries and made a mention of their Kashmir relate works besides their outstanding contributions to the fields of Kashmir historiography. This includes the phases of development of local language and literature in different periods which is given in another essay. He also very sensitively classified various Kashmiri literary works into different periods. The author has included his four essays on Lalla Arifa and another on the life and works of Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani (RA).

Monastic life is discussed under Reshiyet and Rehbaniyet write ups on Kashmir coins festivals and folks music show the depth and expertise of the author. The articles on Masnavi Tarikh-e-Imbiyah, Mahjoorare informative and interesting.

The book also has provided space for several articles on the life and works of Abdul Ahad Azad, Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Shurida Kashmiri, Har Gopal Khasta and others. The author in the article on Miss Milinson has highlighted her contributions in the field of providing education to Kashmir women. She is said to have been instrumental in introducing modern education among the Kashmiri women. However, she has been neglected altogether in Kashmir in the word of M Y Taing, there is no road, no park neither any institution named after this lady which according to the said Kashmiri critic is our utter ungratefulness.

The present book is printed in computerized print and comprises 392 pages. M Y Taing, the noted literary figure has written introductory note. Says he: "Rasool Pompur has written these essays with hard his essays on Kashmir coins Jahangir's coins, Kashmiri festivals he looks to have studied with shrewdness."

However, Taing has also hinted at some minor mis-

takes and wised their correction. Those could have easily been avoided by putting some more efforts.

But then these are not so big mistakes as such. Such things always happen due to oversight. After all the book is a fresh collection of research articles on Kashmiri cultural, history and literature.

KABUL TO KASHMIR

No doubt people may have reservations against rulers but not against the ruled one's. The common man of Afghanistan is not so bad as he did not vow for peace and prosperity. They are good, as are others. They also condemn the recent terrorist attacks on USA. But when harsh and oppressive steps are initiated against them what do you expect from a common Afghani.

The land where discontent, poverty and oppression already prevail, rather rule, what would be the effect of USA attacks, one can easily imagine.

Such situations have developed where it looks peace will hardly make a comeback on that land, feels Abdul Rashid, a common Kashmiri. Rashid feels turmoil, conflicts, oppressions and poverty is in their fate, what they have been facing since decades together.

In such circumstances when Afghans again are under attacks the resentment over such incidents by their sympathizers is quit a natural phenomenon i.e. what we have been watching on TVs and through newspapers.

Kashmiris who have got long lasting political and cultural ties with Pakhtoon and Pashtoo people are very much worried about the fate of their Afghan neighbours.

History is witness when Afghans were attacked by communists, demonstrations were held throughout the valley. Kashmiris raised a slogan against Communists that was Pak-Iran-Afghanistan, Communistoun ka Kabristan (Pak, Iran and Afghanistan shall prove graveyard for Communists).

In these days we saw Kashmiris expressing solidarity with Afghans. In this regard they even turned down the appeal of All Party Hurriyat Conference and observed complete shut down. This seems all because the two nations have deep political and cultural links. Several Pakhtoon and Pashtoon families are still living in Kashmir while few of Kashmir tribes, mostly Khans and Pathans, originally belonged to Afghan land.

Besides, the people across have many things in common. Kashmiris and Pashtoons are known well civilized as well cultured people. They have very rich old cultures and share many common traditions.

The simple style of living, joint family system hospitable approach, similar dress and dish traditions, common music and musical instruments are the main things which are shared commonly by the two people..

Although Kashmiris lost most of its old traditions and paved a way for Punjabi culture to take lead but Pa-

shtoon and Pakhtoons despite hardships did not lose their rich traditions. They are enough brave to fight, not only the political aggressions but even, cultural invasions.

Besides sharing many common things, the two nations have very long political and cultural links Since times immemorial Afghanistan serve as the corridor for Kashmir and at time influenced the cultural and political scenario of the land.

Numerous people, which included Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Turks Tartars, Mughals etc. found passage to this land of mountains and plains from Kandhar. The ancient ruins, coins, sculptures found in Kashmir have got less Indian features and more Gandhara influence. Gandhara (the ancient name of Kandhar) cultivated a unique art during Greeks which other art during Greeks which other art institutions of the sub-continent were not knowing. The ancient links of Kashmir with Afghanistan has been so deep that Kashmir at several places has been referred as Gandhara-Kashmir. If you have a deep observation of Rajtarangni you will find Kalhana, the medieval period historian of Kashmir, has opened the much acclaimed historical account with a description of Afghanistan. Once, in medieval period, Kashmir got included as a state of Kabul Empire.

During the Mughal rule there was also close contact and commercial and political exchange between the two races. A stage reached when Afghanis came to rule Kashmir and held it for about sixty seven years. No doubt few governors were harsh and oppressive; But it were the Kashmiris who invited Ahmad Shah Abdali to Kashmir. Abdali was in Lahore when he received an invitation from the leaders of Kashmir to rule them. All the governors of Kabul were not oppressive. There are many who cared well for their subjects and promoted constructional works in Kashmir. The governor Amir Khan Jawasher (1770 AD) constructed the Shergarhi Fort which included the present area of old secretarial and deputy commissioner's office. Mention may be made of Atta Muhammad Khan (1810 AD). He is said to have been an enlightened man. He took deep and personal interest in restoring peace in the valley. He built up agricultural and commercial structure for the land, besides promoted learning and art. He built several forts here but we could not preserve those all. One such fort in dilapidated state is seen at Kohimaran top in Srinagar.

The Afghans are also said to have shown great interest in the promotion of Kashmiri shawl industry. The Kashmiri shawl became popular in Iran, Turkistan and Europe. George Forster writes in 1783 AD, "In Kashmir is seen merchants and commercial agents of most of princi-

pal cities of north India. Tatars, Persians and Turks at the same time advanced their fortunes and enjoyed the pleasure of a fine climate and country over which are profusely spread the various beauties of nature.' He puts the number of shawl looms to 16,000 during the Afghan period.

Afghan rulers made a permanent mint here and issued thousands of coins from Kashmir.

These gold, silver and copper coins had Persian poetry inscribed on them. Ayoub Shah's coins bear this couplet:

Shud Roshan Jahan Roshan Ter Az Khurshid Wa Mah
Az Shaie Sika Ayoub Shah.

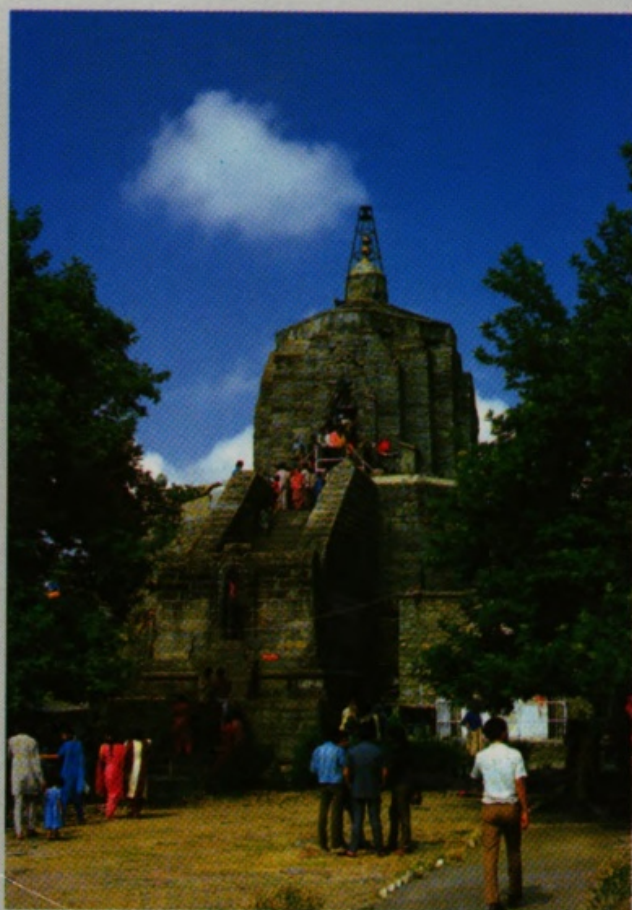
Atta Muhammad came more closer to Kashmiri culture when he struck his coins in the name of two Muslim Saints of Kashmir, sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (RA) and Sheikh Hamza Makhdoomi (RA). Afghan missionaries did not less effort here to promote Persian art and literature.

The two nations are so deeply tied, that is why what happens in that land also affects this land and the people of Kashmir. The two people have been sharing several other things in different fields of life and sometimes it looks that Kashmiris are culturally more related to Pakhtoons and Pashtoons than Punjabis.

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